ISTANBUL
A GLOBAL PLAYER IN THE ASSOCIATION MARKET
***ISTANBUL***

**A Tale of Two Cities**

When I was told I would go to Istanbul on a press trip I got all worked up to be honest. Indeed, all the people I know who had been there came back with a spark in their eyes. My editor-in-chief Marcel A.M. Vissers even once told me it is one of his favorite cities in the world, and he’s been around the world! So I was impatient to discover a destination everybody is talking about. And I was not the least disappointed. Istanbul is a fascinating place on the move, a natural gateway on two continents, and a meeting destination like no other.

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The largest city in Turkey, Istanbul constitutes the country’s economic, cultural, and historical heart, with its commercial and historical centre lying on the European side and about a third of its population living on the Asian side of Eurasia. Divided by one of the world’s busiest and most famous waterways, the Bosphorus Strait, it’s a metropolis rich in 8,500 years, where Greeks, Persians, Romans and Venetians took turns ruling before the Ottomans stormed into town and decided to stay. As the final place on the legendary Silk Routes were many merchants settled, Istanbul has retained a cultural diversity up to this day. Istanbul’s population is estimated to be over 14.2 million people, making it also one of the largest cities in Europe and the world.

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**CRANES EVERYWHERE**

Booming with new projects and cranes and constructions sites everywhere you look, Istanbul is also a leading meeting destination offering unique and exciting venues, capable of hosting up to 30,000 delegates at once, which is quite rare in our industry. There are four separate but integrable meeting and exhibition clusters in the city, from the Airport District, the Congress Valley to the Golden Horn and Asian side (more on this p7-8 of this supplement). Combined with Istanbul’s historic venues, palaces, museums, bazaars, cisterns and more high-tech places, association planners are offered a variety of options to create truly outstanding events.

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Özgül Özkan Yavuz, General Manager, Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau, puts it like this: ‘A magnet for dynamic and talented people from around the world, Istanbul is the ideal MICE destination with its vibrancy, modernity, swathe of new infrastructure and enviable geographical position. The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) has already ranked it as 8th in the world in its 2013 Rankings for Cities and Countries and 1st for large congresses of 500 delegates. As the European Capital of Culture 2010 and European Capital of Sport 2012, Istanbul attracted over 11.8 million international tourists in 2014 which makes the city the 6th most popular destination in the world. The outstanding combination of MICE facilities and great leisure options make it an unique meeting destination.’
Easily accessible from around the world, with simple visa requirements (and even a great one-click-away e-visa system!), Istanbul is served by most of the international airlines at its two international airports both on two continents. With a network of more than 260 direct flights to five continents, Turkish Airlines has been named ‘Best Airline Europe’ by Skytrax for four years consecutively. As the company’s slogan rightly says, it flies to more countries than any other airline in the world. It also boasts one of the greatest airport lounges I have ever seen, complete with a comfortable library and a movie theatre! And it’s not all. Upcoming infrastructure projects include a third airport for 2018 which will cater to 150 million passengers, making Istanbul the largest airline hub in the world, and a new road tunnel which will connect Asia and Europe under the Bosphorus.

**BOOMING WITH NEW PROJECTS AND CRANES AND CONSTRUCTIONS SITES EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK, ISTANBUL IS ALSO A LEADING MEETING DESTINATION OFFERING UNIQUE AND EXCITING VENUES**

**A TRULY GLOBAL CITY**

If the city’s biggest draw remains its historic centre, partially listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a cultural and entertainment hub across the harbor, the Golden Horn and the Beyoglu district, Istanbul is also considered - and rightly so - a truly global city, with one of the fastest-growing metropolitan economies in the world and 22,000 international companies, creating a strong financial ecosystem and countless of opportunities for investment. Istanbul also hosts the headquarters of many Turkish companies and media outlets and accounts for more than a quarter of the country’s gross domestic product.

With one of the youngest populations in Europe and students to be counted by the thousand, Istanbul houses high-quality educational institutions, cultural diversity and enviable lifestyle that have transformed the city into an internationally recognised centre for human resources. Istanbul’s 49 universities and 5 technological development zones are testament to the city as a hub of learning, inspiration and innovation, perfectly in line with the meetings industry and its ‘knowledge economy’ perspective.

Of course, Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau (ICVB) is here to help you make the most of your event. As a non-profit organisation, it offers impartial advice and a wide range of services ranging from the arrangement of site inspections for association planners, the support of congress candidature process by preparing official bids, the coordination with local suppliers as well as national authorities and the preparation of promotional materials, just to name a few.

**CONTACT**

Özgül Özkan Yavuz  
General Manager  
Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau  
T. +90 212 522 55 55  
ozgul.yavuz@icvb.org  
www.icvb.org

**ISTANBUL AT A GLANCE**  
**WORLD’S TOP 10 CONGRESS DESTINATION**

- Maximum capacity: 30,000 delegates
- 7 convention centres, 3 exhibition centres, 49 universities
- 94,000 bed capacity, 170 five-star and four-star hotels and 107 more to be open soon
- 2 airports, with Turkish Airlines boasting a network of more than 260 direct flights to 5 continents
- 146 international congresses in 2013
- 355,602 companies registered at the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce
- 21,973 companies with foreign partners
- 42 local and international banks with 3,527 branches
Interview

How does Istanbul cater to international associations?

Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau was established in 1997 as the first official destination marketing organisation in Turkey. Since then the bureau has been working effectively on promoting Istanbul as an international congress destination. The city first broke into the ranks of the World’s Top 10 Congress Destinations in 2010 according to ICCA, and has entrenched its place as a Top 10 congress destination since then. The mission of the Istanbul CVB is to position the city as a leading meetings and conventions destination and make the Top 3 rankings.

Istanbul CVB has also produced its first comprehensive research and statistics report on both the national and international situation of the meeting industry in Istanbul. It includes not only international congresses but also national tradeshows, fairs, meetings and congresses. We have detailed who prefer Istanbul in which months or which venues were used for meetings, as well as the subjects that were dealt with during conferences. This first ‘360 degrees’ report studies the impact of MICE on our city and creates a significant awareness among those not familiar with our industry. Furthermore, for the first time ever, we also have been able to estimate the income of the congress industry in Istanbul.

The numbers show that Istanbul hosted 143 national congresses in 2014 and 123 international congresses in 2014. This has been increasing rapidly over the past years. We also welcomed a record number of 11.8 million visitors in 2014. Both business and leisure numbers are growing, while the city’s infrastructure, capacity of hotels and (un)usual venues are doing so as well. So the demand is growing in concert with the supply!

Opportunity Report of PwC says Istanbul is one of the most dynamic cities in the world at the moment, with one of the most dynamic and diverse economies in Europe, a fast-growing, increasingly important gateway between Turkey and all prominent, booming economies. Its cosmopolitan character makes it an ideal nexus for global business services. Istanbul is hosting more than 100 conferences and meetings in 2015 with an attendance anticipated to be just under 50,000 delegates. The range of topics covered is wide, including agriculture, commerce, economics, education, industry, law, medical sciences and technology with organisations from more than 20 countries worldwide. The medical sciences sector will be particularly strongly represented with a percentage of 22%. We will host, for instance, the 17th World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf in August.

ÖZGÜL ÖZKAN YAVUZ

‘Innovation is a cultural heritage in Istanbul’

Before joining the Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau a year ago, Özgül Özkan Yavuz was Deputy Director at the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism’s Istanbul Office. A woman of passion and strength, she explains here in what ways Istanbul stands out as an association destination.
with 7,000 delegates, the International Epilepsy Congress in September, with 4,000 attendees, or the World Veterinary Congress in September, with 5,000 delegates.

Would you say Istanbul is a ‘knowledge hub’? Can you expand a bit about which clusters, which fields of expertise there are in Istanbul?

Istanbul has in-depth knowledge across many fields and the potential to absorb much more, with high-quality educational institutions, cultural diversity and an enviable lifestyle. With 606,000 students and 40,000 Erasmus students in 49 universities, the city hosts almost one third of Turkey’s universities and one tenth of students. The investment in academic researches has, for example, yielded a rapid increase in the awareness of intellectual property rights. Still a fast-growth economy, but no longer a fast-follower, Istanbul has become one of the global centres of excellence with its differentiated knowledge. The city is seeing expansion in such fields as the medical sciences, general science, industry-specific sectors, economics, transportation, architecture and design.

Innovation is more than a phenomenon in Istanbul: it’s a cultural heritage. Patent applications per year have risen 736% when 2013 figures are compared to 2002 figures. As the technological hub of Turkey, Istanbul ranks 1st in every single category of patent applications, utility model applications and industrial design applications.

Do you run an Ambassador Programme?

As the bureau, we are aware of the importance of creating awareness among universities. We have conducted our first Congress Ambassador Programme in 2007. We reached out to 47 congress ambassadors by the end of 2011. We will do the utmost effort to increase this number this year.

With the ‘Become an Ambassador of Congress for Istanbul’ programme created and executed by Istanbul CVB, we are expanding Istanbul’s congress portfolio. We have a strong academic community due to our 49 universities and we are trying to mobilize them. Istanbul CVB is helping those academicians on congress bids and opening up new doors for the whole of Istanbul’s meeting industry.

On the candidacy procedures front, Istanbul CVB helps ambassadors with such services as preparing a presentation, gathering required documents, sending an invitation letter, preparing the candidacy dossier, coordinating with the local authorities and suppliers, and also inviting the decision makers in the city during inspection trips.

Obviously Istanbul has changed a lot in the past years. Can you tell us about the latest infrastructure developments?

In addition to the few projects I believe you have mentioned in the introduction of this supplement, a third bridge along the Bosphorus is currently being constructed as part of the 260km-long Northern Marmara Motorway, which will bypass urban areas of Istanbul in the north. Once completed, it will be the longest combined motorway/railway bridge in the world and the world’s ninth longest suspension bridge. Moreover, rail, metro and tramway lines will all be extended to reach 420 km by 2019.

We are also trying to increase our efforts in the environment and sustainability area. This involves the Bureau Veritas and the Turkish Hotels and Investors Association (TUROB), which set up a Hotel Greening Project in order to move the environmental agenda forward among hotels, encouraging them to implement environmentally friendly strategies. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IBB), one of the major authority giving great importance to sustainability, has also set up a few programmes designed to make Istanbul more environment friendly, with electric vehicle charging stations, recycled energy and waste and so on.
CASE STUDY

At IAIM Conference in Istanbul, Immunization Managers Share Challenges and Successes

Last March at the InterContinental Istanbul, the International Association of Immunization Managers (IAIM) assembled over 130 of its members from nearly 70 countries to discuss how their diverse experiences can inform efforts to improve the performance of national immunization programs.

Immunization is the one of the “best buys” in public health, saving millions of lives each year. Yet, too often, immunization managers - the public health professionals responsible for managing each country’s immunization efforts and ensuring vaccines reach their population - are facing new challenges with limited resources. Therefore, enhancing and developing their management and leadership skills are needed to ensure that their programs achieve outstanding performance.

FOSTERING DIALOGUE

During the two-day conference in Istanbul, members participated in informational sessions led by immunization experts, panel discussions and breakout meetings. All aspects of the conference were designed to foster dialogue between health professionals and exchange best practices in immunization program management. In addition, IAIM members elected the Association’s first Governing Council, which will provide direction and leadership through 2017.

Immunization managers play a critical role in managing and integrating each element of a successful immunization program: cost-effective and dependable procurement processes; reliable funding; an effective cold chain; consistent monitoring of vaccine safety and efficacy; effective surveillance systems; productive and proactive communication with the public; and, well-trained health workers.

“Effective program management is one of the most influential determinants of whether global and regional immunization goals will be met,” said Peter Carrasco, Director of the IAIM Secretariat at the Sabin Vaccine Institute. “However, immunization managers are too often under-trained, unable to access the information they need and lack a support network for seeking new approaches to manage their programs’ challenges. This conference has helped to address these needs.”

WHY ISTANBUL

An important consideration in selecting Istanbul was its accessibility from around the world. On behalf of IAIM, K2 Conference and Event Management Co. organised visa and travel for some 130 participants from 70 different countries around the world.

Peter Carrasco explains: ‘We had participants coming from all corners of the globe to attend the meeting, so we felt that Istanbul, a multicultural and centrally located city, was the most convenient location for our Inaugural Conference. What’s more, the Turkish e-visa system was attractive, as it allowed the majority of our members to quickly and easily complete their visa applications online. Finally, Istanbul was competitively priced (compared to other locations in Europe) and the hotels that we considered all had significant experience hosting large conferences.’

www.iaimanagers.org
MEETING VENUES
Take your pick

Istanbul being the largest city in Turkey, it’s only normal you find more than a couple of congress centres and meeting venues where you can organise an association conference. The list below is of course not comprehensive, but it will give you a better idea of what’s on offer in the city.

Whether it’s a 100-people meeting or a 30,000-participant congress, Istanbul can host events of any size and format. With 7 convention centres and 3 exhibition centres, the city boasts 4 independent meeting clusters spread in different districts: the Congress Valley, the Golden Horn, the Airport Area and the Asian side.

The city centre of Istanbul houses two main meeting facilities. Situated adjacent to Harbiye Mushin Ertugrul Stage, the Istanbul Congress Center (ICC) is a multi-level complex which was built to host the 2009 IMF and World Bank Group Annual Meeting. It covers more than 14,700 sqm of exhibition space, and includes a 3705-pax auditorium and 115 meeting rooms. It’s your typical meeting venue, big as it gets if you wish, but with a twist: all levels are underground... but most of them with daylight! ICC is located within only five minutes distance to the Taksim area of Istanbul, close to a handful of leading five-star hotels, and this central location, easily accessible by public transport, makes it quite convenient for delegates. All of Istanbul Congress Center’s conference rooms are equipped with the latest technology and adjustments can be made to accommodate events of any size and type. ICC’s kitchens are impressive (I’ve seen them with my own eyes!): they provide domestic and foreign guests with premium meals for every budget based on whichever theme from the Turkish or world cuisines you can think of.

Istanbul Lütfi Kırdar ICEC, shortly ICEC, is a multi-purpose convention complex located in the Congress Valley, in the heart of the European side of Istanbul, within walking distance to major five- and four-star hotels. As the very first convention venue of Turkey, it features a 2000-pax auditorium, over 9,000 sqm of exhibition space, and 45 spacious and recently
renovated multifunctional meeting rooms (with 27 in the main building). ICEC offers an outstanding combination of state-of-the-art facilities and superior service, and the building is connected with a passage to Istanbul Congress Center and Harbiye Mushin Ertugrul Stage across the street. Worth mentioning is also ICEC’s Terrace, with eye-dazzling views of Istanbul, an excellent choice for hosting dinners, cocktails, and open-air events. Connecting the Main Building and the Rumeli Building, the Terrace can be used for events held in both buildings.

The business district of Istanbul near Congress Valley has nothing to blush about when it comes to meeting venues. One of the first five-star congress hotels in Turkey, Grand Cevahir Hotel & Convention Center is situated a few minutes away from Taksim Square and has 22 separate meeting halls for a total capacity of 5,000 guests and a 2500 sqm ballroom, the largest ballroom in Europe. Grand Cevahir Hotel & Convention Center might well be the place to hold a residential conference, combining five-star technology with five-star comfort. Its Auditorium is quite unique for a hotel as it can host 1013 people, with all kinds of state-of-the art systems, from simultaneous translation booths to Acoustic Fiqueras seats to backstage changing rooms and 8 meeting rooms located all around. This is perfectly suitable for large seminars and conferences.

At Haliç Congress Center, situated on the shores of the Golden Horn, I experienced one of the most original site inspections ever, in the form of a game where you had to answer questions that led you to discover the facility inside and out. Another massive complex which hosted the 5th World Water Forum among other renowned events, the centre seduces not only by its location, overlooking the famous Pierre Loti Hill, but also by its architectural Turkish flair. And it seems the people working there are not just suppliers but partners of their clients, many of whom they have long-standing relationships with. With its unique and very flexible product offering, Haliç Congress Center is the only seaside congress centre in Istanbul. The teams working together are expert at making any event a success. With the extension project that is currently under discussion - hopefully it will be ready by 2017 - they will become even more competitive in this ever-competitive market. Haliç Congress Center houses a 3008-pax auditorium, and meeting spaces covering an area of 102,000 sqm. Its usable open space makes up 16,000 sqm while its total indoor exhibition area amounts to 9,000 sqm.

CNR Expo, in the Airport Area, is a business people’s favourite with its indoor area of 150, 000 sqm and outdoor area of 120,000 sqm and its 8 halls, making it the largest fair complex in Eurasia. Highly specialized in the organisation of international and regional exhibitions for 20 years,
CNR Expo is also perfectly capable of hosting large association meetings, with its solid infrastructure, very flexible space and enthusiastic team. Easily accessible by subway, land and sea, and a few minutes’ drive from International Ataturk Airport, the venue, managed by CNR Holding, has proved to be very popular for congresses, seminars and launches with its location close to four- and five-star hotels. It has 15 meeting rooms and a wealth of expertise in all kinds of fields, as it brings together, on a weekly basis bringing, people from all five continents.

In the Airport Area, **Istanbul Expo Center (IFM)**, owned by World Trade Center Istanbul, is the biggest exhibition ground in Turkey. The Center stretches over 162,000 sqm and the overall rentable area is 98,000 sqm, consisting of 11 exhibition halls, located inside the WTC Istanbul facility. By taking the organisation of exhibitions in Istanbul beyond world standards, WTC Istanbul profoundly strives to make Istanbul the capital of the exhibition world and currently hosts around 100 exhibitions each year. Trade shows and fairs that are held in Istanbul Expo Center attract hundreds of thousands of visitors, and open up new markets and opportunities for companies in a global context. In addition, IFM operates IFM TV, an online service which broadcasts the exhibitions and the other events that take place on its premises. Thanks to venues like IFM, Istanbul is really a global city!

In the Airport Area as well, the **WOW Convention Center** is the biggest convention hall in Istanbul that also offers first-class accommodation services with its 34 halls, 8,500 sqm meeting area and a capacity of 6,500 people. Perfectly capable of hosting major national and international conventions, meetings, trade fairs, and other large-scale gatherings, the WOW Convention Center spans an indoor column-free area of 3,108 sqm in total. The main hall can be divided into three sub-sections in eleven different forms and features five simultaneous interpretation cabins and a business services centre. And it can even create high-quality catering menus specifically tailored to your event, in addition to a much-needed free high-speed wireless Internet connection, and free shuttle service to and from the airport and city centre. Both WOW Airport Hotel, with 360 guest rooms, and WOW Istanbul Hotel, with 278 rooms, are accessible directly from the Convention Center’s foyer and provide extreme comfort after a hard day’s work at a conference.

In addition to the above-mentioned venues, Istanbul offers several multi-purpose indoor sport arenas, theatres, cultural and show centres, where you can also organise mega events or smaller gatherings. Combined with unique incentives that can be held at Istanbul’s many historic venues, palaces, cisterns and high tech modern venues, they make up a whole range of remarkable options so that meeting planners can create truly outstanding events. Not all cities in the world are blessed with this kind of offering! All these venues are easily accessible thanks to Istanbul’s efficient transport system… you will just have to take your pick.
With offsite venues ranging from Ottoman Palaces to cisterns, from modern facilities to mansions basking on the Bosphorus shores, Istanbul is sure to enthrall you. Fusing cultures like no other place, providing a wonderful cuisine from the East and the West, it will also delight you with its post- or pre-congress options.

One of the most unique event venues on the Bosphorus, where East meets West architecturally, the Sait Halim Pasha Mansion offers exclusive and professional service for all kinds of events, combined with a 19th-century Ottoman culture experience in the heart of Istanbul. The Mansion was built by Petraki Adamandidis in 1878 and the only wooden building on the coastal line at the time. In terms of capacity, the venue accommodates cocktails for 1,200 guests or 800 for a seated dinner. Smaller, intimate parties are also possible, always with a breathtaking view of the Bosphorus!

Another place where you can admire views of the Bosphorus is Portaxe, which was opened in 2006 and expanded in 2007 with a big meeting hall capable of hosting events of any size and format. Guests praise Portaxe for its unparalleled and glamorous scenery – and rightly so! Now operated by LS Banquet, it provides an ideal alternative place for events with its 450 sqm indoor area, and 550 sqm outdoor facilities. Portaxe has its own private pier and is accessible by sea. Centrally located, it is also two minutes away from the TEM Fatih Bridge Highway toll booths.

With its conference and concert halls, the Seed plays host to many events and is one of Istanbul’s most popular, multipurpose event venues. As part of the Sabanci University Sakip Sabanci Museum and operated by GL events, the Seed is home to many national and international cultural events. Located on the Bosphorus as well, it combines modern architectural features and hi-tech solutions. In addition to its 1,700 sqm area, it is renowned for its 400 sqm outdoor terrace with an outstanding view. The Seed’s conference and concert hall, accommodating up to 330 pax, can be used both as an auditorium or a simple flat surface. Additionally, the venue is well known for its indoor and outdoor foyer areas, which total 600 sqm, as well as its advanced technology sound, light and visual systems.

Hard Rock Café Istanbul is located in the old “Sponeck Beerhouse” building, where Turkey’s first public film was screened in 1896, near the iconic Istiklal Street and live music neighborhoods that render Istanbul so vibrant. The multi-story facility includes a live music stage, three vibrant bars, cozy dining areas with more than 300 seats, a beautiful terrace, and private rooms excellent for events, meetings and press conferences. The Cafe also includes upscale technology and design features that blend the heritage of the city with the attitude and aesthetic of Hard Rock.

After a hard day’s work at a conference, there are many things you can do in Istanbul only. Cruises along the Bosphorus are definitely a must. The city is the capital of three empires (Ottoman, Byzantine and Roman), the meeting point of cultures and civilizations, and divided by two continents! Home to a diverse culture and vibrant crowd, Istanbul’s Bosphorus divides the city and the continents: a boat tour on a beautiful evening promises breathtaking scenery for your guests.
Other noteworthy incentive options include:

**Turkish Bath experience at The Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia) Hurrem Sultan Hamam**
The Ayasofya (Hagia Sophia) Hurrem Sultan Hamam was designed and built by Mimar Sinan, the chief Ottoman architect, by order of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent for his wife Hurrem Sultan in the 16th century. It was constructed where the ancient public baths of Zeuxippus used to stand, between the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia. The area is also particularly significant as the site where the Temple of Zeus once stood. In 2008, the Ayasofya Hurrem Sultan Bath was restored according to its original features. With its unique structure, opened for 450 years now, it inaugurated a new era in Turkish Bath architecture and was, at the time, the very first facility where the women and men sections were on the same level.

**Turkish Cuisine experience / Centuries-old recipes at Asitane Restaurant, Nar Restaurant and Matbah Restaurant**
As Turkey’s ultimate dining and cultural capital, Istanbul provides a variety of dining options offering a variety of dishes that synthesize Eastern and Western cultures together. With many classy establishments alongside the Bosphorus shore, fish and mezze restaurants, ancient Ottoman places, modern well-known food chains… you name them, Istanbul has them, no matter what your budget is. Centuries-old recipes of Ottoman cuisine can be found at Asitane Restaurant, Nar Restaurant and Matbah Restaurant, or you can enjoy a traditional Turkish Night at Kervansaray Restaurant.

**1001 Direk Cistern**
According to Byzantium resources, the Binbirdirek Cistern was constructed in the 4th century as the second biggest water reservoir in Istanbul after Basilica Cistern. While civilizations, countries, emperors and people have been changing, the 1001 Direk Cistern has remained the same for the last 1680 years, holding a distinctive place in Istanbul’s cultural and artifice life… and congress efforts. The Cistern is open for visits but also serves as an alternative option for gala dinners, cocktails and such. It has the capacity of 1,200 guests for a sit-down dinner and 3,000 for a standing cocktail.
A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Let your business demonstrate its flare and imagination by choosing Istanbul as your next meeting destination.

Istanbul is uniquely positioned, geographically and historically, to inspire and connect people like you to a cultural backdrop of the old and new.

A tale of two cities makes Istanbul like no other.