

CIT

Volcanoes and strikes

How to prepare for the worst p15

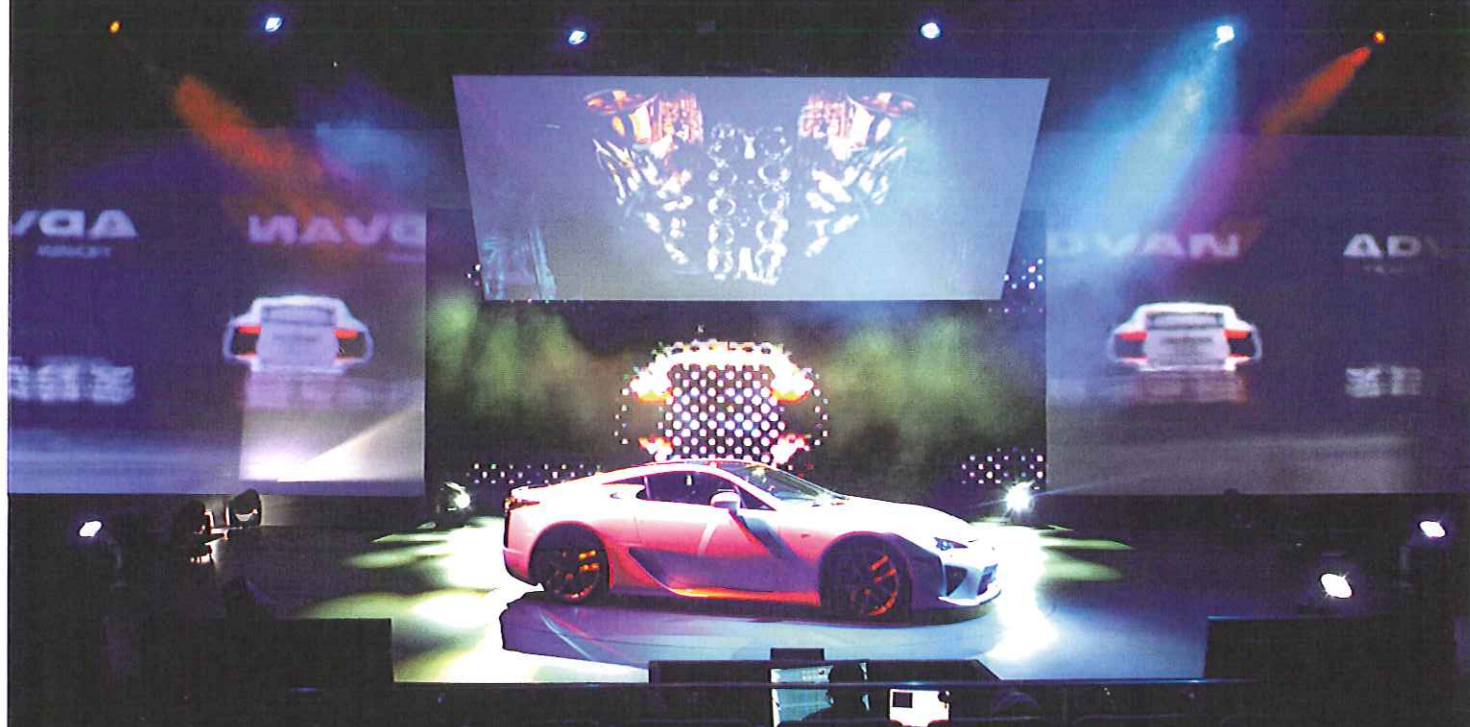
Christmas parties

Is seasonal cheer on the menu? p30

Capital of culture

Abu Dhabi's grand openings p81

Conference & Incentive Travel



Lexus showcase inspires dealers

The auto giant picks **Brussels** to motivate its 900-strong European network and outline its brand and new product strategy p26

PLUS

BRANDS... Sky, Balfour Beatty, Goodyear Dunlop, Zurich, Honda, Co-operative Bank, Fiat, Lufthansa...

MALTA

10 things *you didn't know about* Malta

The well known location still has some hidden gems for groups determined to find the best of the island. By *Christy Wyatt*



Hotel Phoenicia

Hotel Phoenicia invested £2.6m upgrading its facilities last year, with improvements to its reception and lobby areas, the Palm Court Lounge, the Phoenix restaurant and the bedrooms and suites on the third and fourth floors. The property offers 136 rooms and a range of restaurants. Event space includes six meeting rooms, five of which have natural daylight, with capacity for 300 delegates. Event planners can also take advantage of Malta's mild climate and host events in the hotel's 7.5-acre garden.

UK C&I focus

The UK C&I market is a key revenue stream for Malta, accounting for almost a fifth (17.5%) of all C&I arrivals in 2009. Unsurprisingly in the current economic climate, UK visitor figures to Malta dropped slightly in 2009 compared with previous years. However, Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) is keen to grow the market. "We are working hard to promote Malta to UK buyers



Walled cities Valletta is the island's historic centre (top), and Mdina cathedral a architectural highlight

this year, attending C&I events and increasing our sales calls to buyers. Our efforts have doubled since the start of the economic downturn," says MTA director UK and Ireland, Alex Incorvaja.

Quality guarantee

To reassure buyers that they can expect high standards of service, consistency and professionalism from ground handlers, the tourism authority awards DMCs that comply with its stringent rules a 'Quality Seal'. Criteria includes being financially sound, acknowledging requests within 24 hours and having at least one member of staff available 24 hours a day during events. Quality-assured DMCs are listed on the MTA's website and include Alpine Sterling Travel and On Site Malta.

Boutique and chic

The island expands its boutique hotel offering next month when The George opens in St Julians, with 112 rooms featuring a host



MALTA

of mod cons, meeting space for up to 140, and a Piazza bar and rooftop sky lounge (www.thegeorgemalta.com). Other boutique options include the 17-room Xara Palace Relais & Chateaux, the 44-room Hotel Juliani and the 93-room Grand Hotel Gozo. For small groups where privacy is vital, the remote Hotel Ta' Cenc is on Calypso Island's highest point, overlooking cliffs and views across to the islands of Malta and Comino. It offers 83 rooms, each with a terrace or private garden.

Rural idylls

The island also offers a range of revamped rustic venues, for example Bella Vista Farmhouses' collection of luxury farmhouses perched on a cliff edge in the village of Xaghra on Gozo. The properties offer views of Marsalforn valley, the ancient Citadel in Victoria and the rolling hills that characterise the Gozitan landscape. Each farmhouse offers a freshwater pool with mosaic tiles, a barbecue area, and en suite Jacuzzi bathtubs.

Better by design

World-renowned architect Renzo Piano is set to redesign the island's capital, Valletta, by reconstructing historic sites that were destroyed during the Second World War bombings. The regeneration project includes rebuilding the entrance to the city, a new outdoor performance venue at the opera site and a new parliament building. The project will see investment of up to £69m and is set to be completed by 2014, when Malta will celebrate 50 years of independence.

ABTA's choice

ABTA has chosen the island as the host destination for the first time for its 2010 Travel Convention, which will take place on 18–20 October 2010. Mark Tanzer, ABTA's chief executive, said: "Malta is a vibrant and

developing destination for UK travellers and the convention will give our members a great opportunity to acquaint – or re-acquaint – themselves with all that it has to offer." The event will take place at the Hilton Malta Conference Centre, which is attached to the Hilton Malta Hotel at Portomaso St Julians.

Pharma market

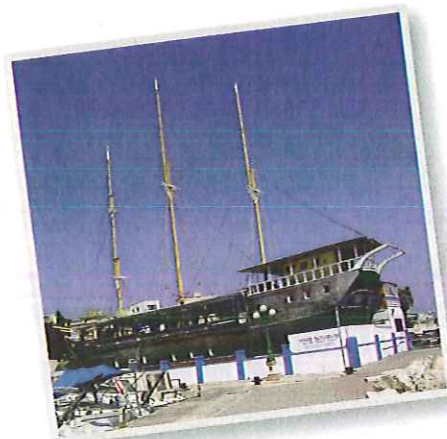
Malta has a wealth of four-star properties that are ideal for the pharmaceutical market, and the MTA held a seminar for the local trade to provide an update on the new regulations within the industry. Options include four-star conference venue the Dolmen Hotel, which is actively targeting the sector.

All ship shape

Corporate delegates can enjoy a taste of history at the Black Pearl restaurant. Built in Sweden in 1909, the 150ft venue is one of the last surviving wooden trading schooners and her history includes a case of weevil worm and sinking 70 feet below the sea at Malta's Marsamxett Harbour, before being restored to star in the film *Popeye*. The ship houses a restaurant and bar serving traditional Maltese dishes, along with Mediterranean cuisine and a selection of fine wines. It has capacity for 220 delegates for a standing reception.

Budget cuts

Malta can offer cost-saving options for business event planners. Overseas companies established in an EU member state outside Malta can now apply for VAT refunds on some business expenses. The application is open to taxpayers who can fulfil a set of criteria, which can be obtained through the guidelines available on www.vat.gov.mt.



A taste of the sea the Black Pearl can cater for 220

Overleaf, Novell hosts managers from three continents on Malta

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BUYER VERDICTS How does Malta rate as a C&I location?



Lisa Winterton
director, Distinctly Different Days
The Palazzo Parisio is a privately owned

venue that may be new to many people. It is an amazing environment for gala dinners and the gilded, mirrored ballroom is one of the most stunning I have seen – it can seat 110. For smaller groups of up to 400, the manicured gardens can be used.



Louise Harding
director and owner, Event Corner
Having recently travelled to Malta, I

have to say that I was very impressed. It offers sunshine, a great range of activities and wonderful venues both on and off the mainland. These include the boutique Hotel Juliani and the fabulous Kempinski hotel, which is situated on the more secluded island of Gozo.



Mervin Moonien
Bank of New York Mellon travel consultant (EMEA)

The Hilton Malta has amazing views, a large event space and good AV. The Mediterranean Conference Centre also has a large, extraordinary space that you wouldn't expect. The people in Malta are very friendly, there are many historical sites, and it's inspiring for outdoor events.



Chris Clarke
director of events, P&MM Events & Communications
Malta offers great

outdoor venues in historic settings, with superb backdrops and excellent dining, plus good weather most of the year. It also offers ease of access, a very vibrant nightlife and great outdoor team-building options, which are eco-friendly and natural in their offerings.

Novell's networking solution

A winter meeting of senior managers arriving from three continents meant location and climate were paramount. *By Christy Wyatt*

Pre-event planning IT firm Novell holds an event twice a year for its Platinum Partners, and has worked with agency Event IT for several years. The event is attended by Novell's top partners, totalling about 50 people, including its executive team. Delegates travel from the UK, US, South Africa, France, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Holland and Portugal, and past events have been held in Majorca, Cannes and Madrid.

Objectives The main objective was for Novell to continue to talk to its partner community at a high level and work together on corporate strategies. Event IT events manager Helen Ellis says: "The event consists of a two-day meeting with a welcome dinner at the hotel on the first night. Guests arrive from many different countries and getting them all there at the same time is challenging."

Challenges Ellis says: "The main challenge on logistics was getting everyone to Malta – it's achievable, though some had to take two flights to get there (via London) as the winter schedule for airlines was in place. All guests were picked up from the airport in executive cars so they did not have to worry about taxis or money, and were taken directly to the venue."

Choosing the right venue was also important. Ellis says: "The client wanted a venue that would keep guests together in one place without too many distractions, where they would feel valued in five-star surroundings. The budget was a big consideration."

Solution Westin Dragonara was chosen. Novell UK channel communications manager EMEA Michelle Dyos said: "Cost was a major factor – it was exceptional value, without



Chosen venue the Westin Dragonara Resort met all the client's objectives from logistics to service



TIMELINE

July 2009 Event IT chooses DMC Alpine Sterling
July 2009 Site visit takes place and a hotel is chosen
August 2009 'Save the dates' reminders sent to delegates
September 2009 Official invitations sent out

compromising on the five-star experience. The hotel ticked all the boxes on service, event space and location."

Delegates were welcomed with drinks and dinner. Although the weather was fair, it was too cold for an outside barbecue, so the venue and DMC Alpine Sterling came up with an alternative space in the hotel – a "separate restaurant on-site so it did not feel we were eating in the hotel. We had an 'indoor barbecue', which was relaxed," says Ellis. During dinner, room drops were made to each guest, consisting of a small hamper of gifts, local wine, delicacies and Maltese glass bottle stoppers.

Delegates spent the second day at the meeting in the hotel, then in the evening travelled to dinner in vintage cars. The group was driven to the ancient walled village of Mdina, where they were met by a tour guide who took them on a walking tour through the streets. They

were then taken to restaurant De Mondion, within the Xara Palace, an old castle.

Post-event analysis Ellis says: "The staff at the Westin Dragonara were excellent, as was Alpine Sterling."

Dyos says: "The destination and the team working on the event understood our requirements, the need to entertain guests from different countries and to inform in a stress-free environment. We are working with Event IT on our next meeting in Amsterdam in May." ■

FACTFILE

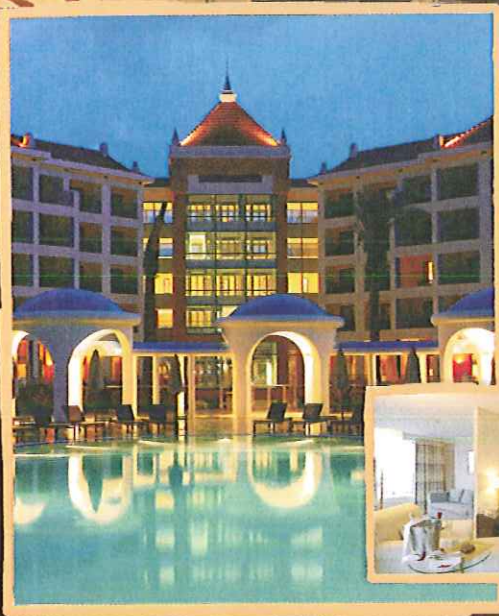
COMPANY	Novell
EVENT	Partner Advisory Board
GROUP SIZE	50
AGENCY	Event IT
DMC	Alpine Sterling
DATE	2-3 November 2009
VENUE	Westin Dragonara Resort
BUDGET	Undisclosed



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