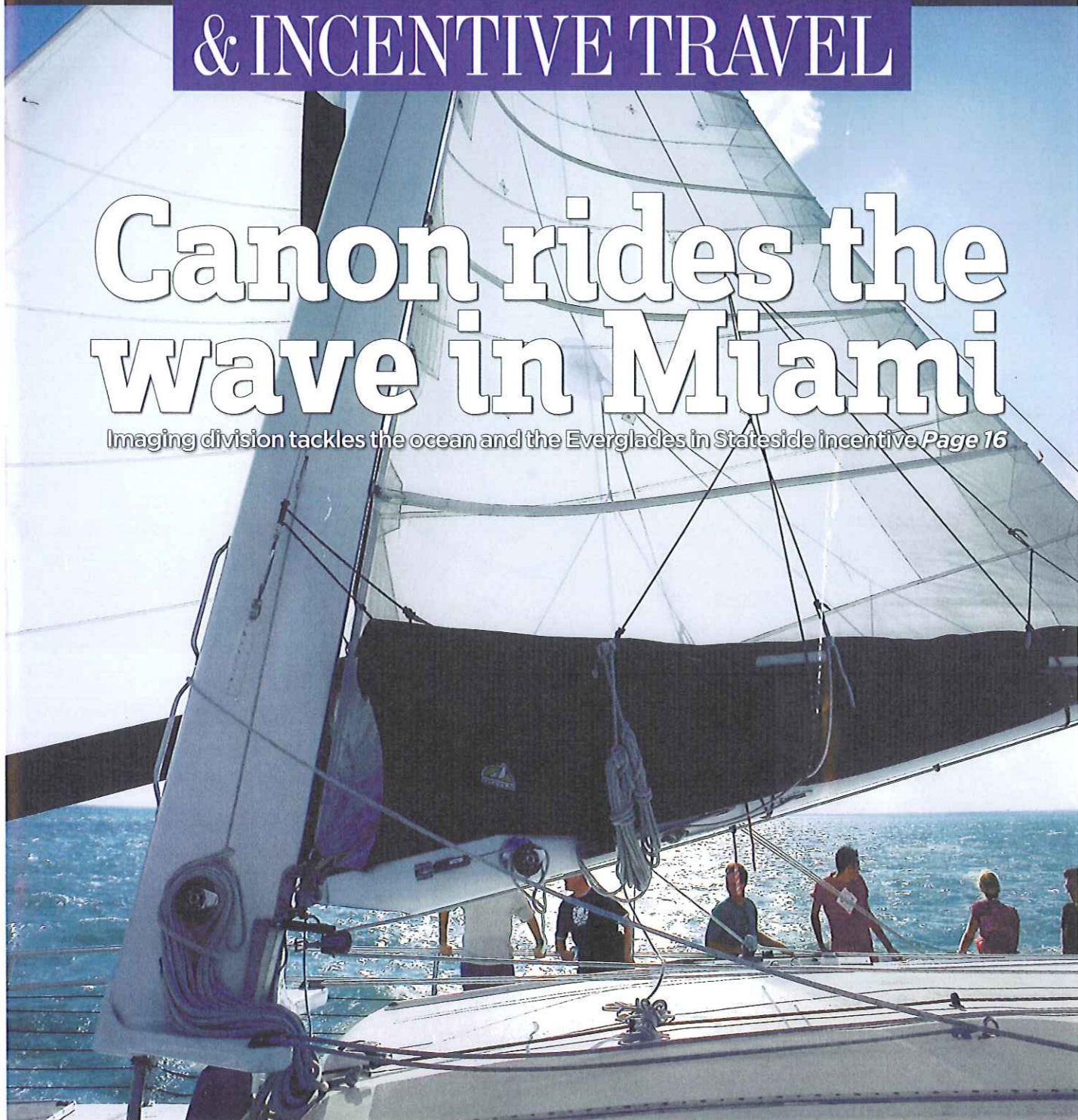


CONFERENCE & INCENTIVE TRAVEL

Canon rides the wave in Miami

Imaging division tackles the ocean and the Everglades in Stateside incentive *Page 16*



Jaguar Land Rover quest
Kenya and Costa Rica add thrills to sales trip *Page 19*



Heinz's top-table affair
Windsor property hosts its leadership forum *Page 47*



BT Wholesale in China
Incentive trip takes in Hong Kong and Beijing *Page 124*

General Motors' motive force

The car maker's events head on working out the details, Watford and water-skiing *Page 26*



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Valletta for history and culture

"In terms of history and culture, Valletta is a masterpiece," says Mario Borg, director at Malta DMC Allianz. "It's a mediaeval city surrounded by fortifications. There's the cathedral, the Grand Master's Palace and lots of museums to visit."

The island's capital is a 16th-century walled city, originally commissioned by the French Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of St John after the epic siege of 1565. The narrow streets of the city are ideal for group treasure hunts, which are a great way of seeing the city and fostering teamwork. Mark Gatt, managing director at DMC EC Meetings, suggests groups take a boat from their hotel in St Julian's into the Grand Harbour. "It's a great way to come into Valletta and you can go around the harbour by boat, followed by a tour on land, taking in the Upper Barrakka Gardens, the Cathedral and the Grand Master's Palace, which are must-sees," he says. "We also do a walking activity in Valletta called 'La Vallette Code', which involves solving cryptic clues while taking in the sights."

Groups interested in getting a more in-depth insight into Malta's 7,000-year history, should head to the Malta Experience, a 45-minute AV presentation, set in an air-conditioned auditorium. A visit to Casa Rocca Piccola, a small palazzo still occupied by a noble Maltese family and open for tours and small group events also offers a unique insight into island life.

St Julians for five-star luxury

As well as being the island's main hub for nightlife, St Julians is the place to stay for groups looking for five-star properties. Abbott Vascular and Thomas Cook, both of which won 2008 Eventia International Awards for events they held in Malta, chose the region as their base. Thomas Cook took 2,000 delegates to Malta for its annual conference at the end of 2006, while Abbott Vascular took 350 sales staff out for a five-day conference last year (See p118).

With Hilton, Intercontinental, Le Méridien, Radisson SAS and Westin all owning properties in the area and offering meeting space, there is no shortage of choice for groups looking for a well known international brand. "We used Le Méridien, Intercontinental and Radisson in St Julian's Bay for the Thomas Cook conference because they are located close together," says DRP group managing director Dale Parmenter. "There were also lots of bars and clubs for delegates to go to in the evening."

Gatt recommends Level 22, the bar at the top of the Hilton Tower in St Julians as a great place for corporate groups. "It has lovely views," he explains. "St Julians is also good for dine-arounds. We can recommend a number of restaurants in close proximity to each other that all offer very typical Mediterranean cuisine and good value for money, such as Lulu, La Dolce Vita, San Giuliana, Deppino's and Al Molo."

Mdina for gala dinners

While there are a number of great gala-dinner venues across the island, its former capital, Mdina, with its origins dating back 4,000 years is a great place to stage a memorable evening event.

"We always propose a night of glamour and glitz in Mdina for clients," says Gatt. "We start by taking them there in old Bentleys and Rolls Royces, which we can do for groups of up to 120, and then we dine in one of the restaurants. My personal favourite is de Mondion, which is very upmarket and serves French cuisine."



Business bastion

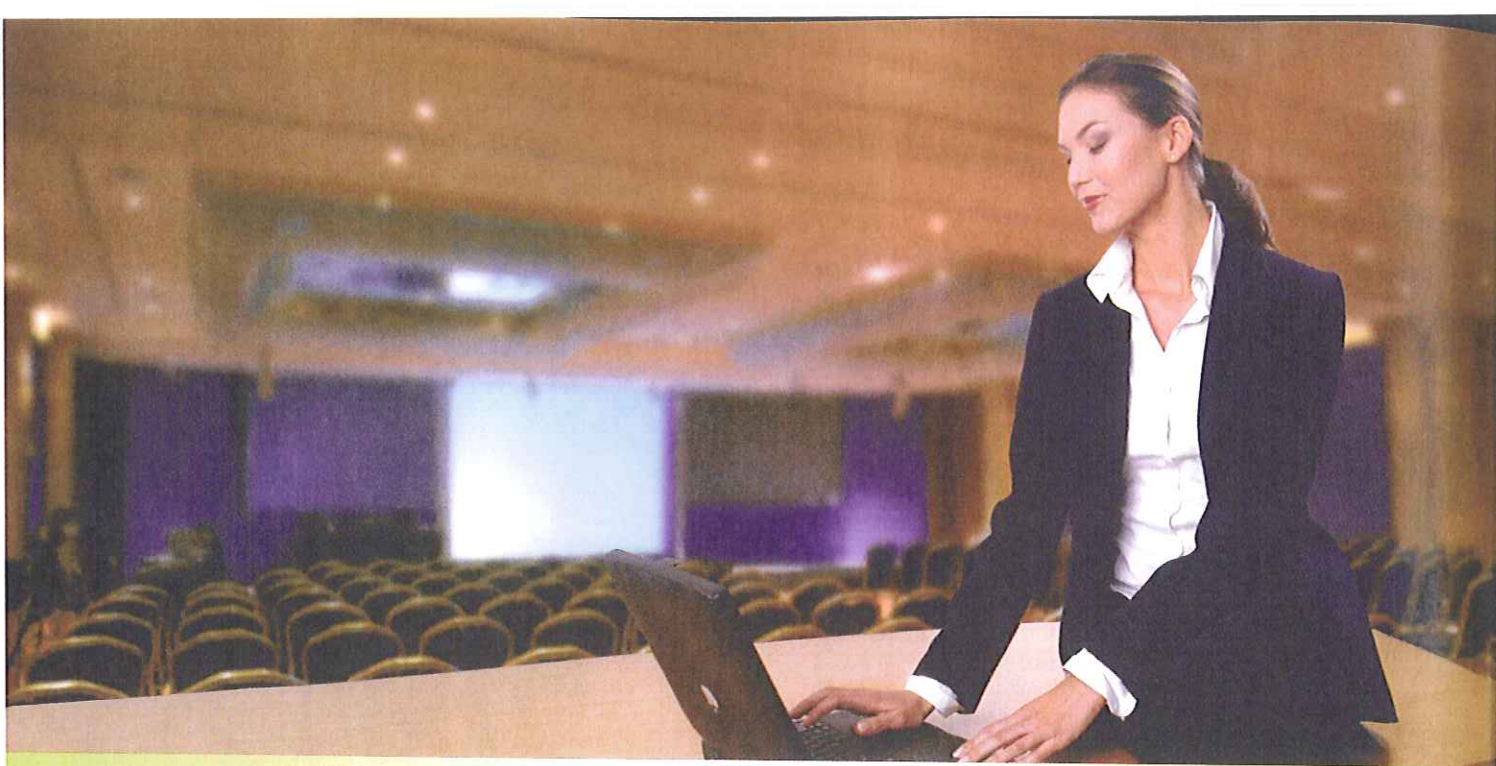
Malta is becoming a C&I stronghold offering venues and activities for group of all kinds. By *Susie Harwood*

De Mondion is located on the rooftop of the Xara Palace Hotel, a Relais & Chateaux property, and offers stunning views over much of the island.

"You can seat about 40 inside for dinner, but they also have a lovely terrace outside on the bastion which can accommodate 50 to 60," adds Allianz's Borg. "We had a project for a large UK group in January and the VIPs dined there."

Another popular choice for large group dinners in Mdina is Bacchus, which is also situated in the Mdina Bastions and can accommodate groups of up to 500. The restaurant was damaged by fire recently, so dinners are currently being hosted in a marquee while the restaurant is rebuilt. "We've used the marquee for dinner and it

Island insight: how the nobility live at Casa Rocca Piccola



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worked well," adds Borg. "The trick is to decorate it, so we organised a 'golden night' for a client there."

Gozo and Comino for outdoor activities

Sister islands Gozo and Comino are less built up than Malta, and ideal for groups wanting to get out in the fresh air, with a host of outdoor activities on offer both on land and at sea.

Comino's Blue Lagoon, which offers snorkelling and scuba-diving in bright turquoise waters, makes an idyllic day out by boat. EC Meetings organises a 'Battle of the Seas' activity, which involves groups being split into two boats and recreating the epic siege just outside the Blue Lagoon with water pistols and canons, with the winning team going onto Comino to find the treasure. "We can also organise a walking treasure hunt on Comino, which we did for a UK client through agency Motivaction last October," says Gatt.

Gozo is larger than Comino and offers a range of accommodation, although many groups choose to simply spend a day there. The Kempinski Hotel San Lawrenz, on the west of the island, offers 120 rooms and suites, meeting facilities and an spa. If team building is on the agenda groups can stay at one of the island's many farmhouses or villas.

Activities on Gozo can include anything from trekking, mountain-biking and Jeep rallies, to local olive oil and wine-tasting.

The north for beaches

The north of Malta is home to many of the island's best and most popular sandy beaches, including Mellieha Bay and Golden Bay. Gatt says Golden Bay is ideal for beach activities, and exclusive evening events. For



Chic with sea views:
The Westin, Malta

example, EC Meetings arranged a boat-building activity for a UK management consultancy last year. "We had 350 delegates in teams of 20 and each had to build a floating vessel and then try and get it to sail," says Gatt. "This was followed by a relaxing cabana night, where we laid on sofas, and cushions with soft lighting and music."

While many of the island's C&I hotels are clustered around St Julian's and Valletta, there are several options for groups wanting to stay in the quieter northern region. Radisson SAS Golden Sands Resort & Spa is a five-star option perched on the clifftop overlooking the beach with 337 rooms, and 12 meeting rooms spread over 2,000m². The St Paul's Bay area, meanwhile, has a number of good four-star hotels, according to Malta Tourist Authority's senior MICE manager, UK & Ireland, Marie Anne Barthet-Brown. "These are good alternative options for pharmaceutical clients," she says.

The north is also home to Popeye Village, in Anchor Bay, a wooden village that was the film set of the 1980 film and that has since become a visitor attraction. Abbott Vascular used the village for its team-building activities at its annual conference, which according to agency World Events business director, Marina Conrad-Evers, was a huge success.

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THE WINNING EVENT

Abbott Vascular's award winner

Abbott Vascular's 2007 sales conference in Malta, organised by World Events with support from DMC Allianz, picked up gold in the Best Conference - Short Haul category at the 2008 Eventia International Awards.

The pharmaceutical firm wanted to motivate its 350-strong European sales team, emphasise teamwork, and prepare them for the year ahead. Linking with the *Casino Royale* film, World Events set the scene for the five-day Mission to Malta 2007 with teaser emails and a microsite inviting delegates to register as undercover secret agents at the conference. The event

included a Bond-themed team-building activity and dinner on the final evening.

C&IT caught up with World Events business director, **Marina Conrad-Evers** to find out what made this event stand out.

WHY MALTA? The event was in April and one of the key requests from the client was a nice environment and good weather. It was also important to give delegates the chance to go somewhere they had not been, and although Malta is a holiday destination, not many delegates had visited. It has also really improved as a conference destination with good

quality infrastructure and service, and it's not too far from central Europe.

WHAT MADE THIS AN AWARD-WINNING EVENT? Malta as a location has real incentive appeal. And because the theme was *Casino Royale*, we were able to really set the scene before the event and use the destination to best effect.

I think one of the reasons we won gold was because the client's message was continuous, both before and after the event, and delivered in a way that was dynamic.

ANY CHALLENGES? In the main, Malta was a



Malta event: the group on a team-building mission

very easy destination to do business with. But I would say that while flight connections are significantly better than before, it could still be improved out of season. The DMC, Allianz, is one of the best we work with in Europe.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN HIGHLIGHTS? The team-building activity, which we held

at Popeye Village, was definitely a highlight. It was great to be outdoors - it was such a beautiful environment and the delegates really enjoyed themselves.

WHAT FEEDBACK DID YOU GET? The client said it was their best sales conference ever, and that it would be a hard act to follow.



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Palazzo Parisio & Gardens

Located in the ancient village of Naxaar, Palazzo Parisio is one of Malta's great stately homes and provides an ornate backdrop for dining and events. The ballroom can hold 110 diners or 150 theatre-style. Other spaces include the Sala Lombarda, the Cellars and the two walled gardens. Recent corporate visitors include Diageo.

Web www.palazzoparisio.com



National Museum of Natural History

Housed in the 18th-century Magisterial Palace of Justice within the medieval walled city of Mdina, the National Museum of History provides a great backdrop for a pre-dinner cocktail reception, while its courtyard makes the perfect setting for an outdoor dinner in the summer months.

Web www.heritagemalta.org/naturalhistorymuseum



PETER BARTOLO PARNIS



Casa Bernard

The restored 16th-century palazzo Casa Bernard is rich with architectural features and history, and offers an insight into Maltese nobility. It is ideal for small intimate functions – the courtyard garden can cater for up to 60 guests or alternatively smaller groups can dine like aristocrats in the formal dining room.

Web www.casabernard.com

Mediterranean Conference Centre

Swarovski is among the corporates to have organised events at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, the former Sacra Infermeria of the Order of St John. It overlooks the Grand Harbour and has a number of event spaces, including La Valette Hall with magnificent vaulted ceilings, which can host 1,500 standing delegates.

Web www.mcc.com.mt



Casa Rocca Piccola

This is one of the last remaining unconverted palaces in Malta and is still lived in by a Maltese noble family. The property has a vast collection of furniture, silver and paintings, displayed in some 50 rooms. The family can organise private lunches or dinners in the courtyard, or small conferences for up to 40 delegates.

Web www.casaroccapiccola.com

Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum

This property recently reopened after a major restoration. It dates back to the early 13th century and is one of the oldest buildings in the former capital Mdina. It can be hired exclusively after public opening hours for drinks and dinner parties, small concerts and other celebrations for around 100 people standing or 30 seated.

Web www.palazzofalson.com

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