

# A WARM WELCOME AND GOOD VALUE

If there is one thing that VisitScotland has always been confident about, it is the fact that sits right at the top of the list of the many benefits Scotland offers good value for money

Scotland may be a small country but it's packed with a diverse offering of exceptional venues, from purpose-built convention and exhibition centres to 21st century hotels and ancient castles, unusual venues and stately homes and universities of academic excellence. Add to this the renowned hospitality of its people and the best golf in the world and Scotland offers a dynamic and distinctive conference choice.

With recent research from VisitBritain highlighting that Edinburgh and Glasgow are both in the top three most competitive European destinations in terms of price for association conferences, it is proven that Scotland really does provide a great return on investment. Many associations already understand and benefit from that message and put Scotland top of their agenda. Hosting on average two association events a week, the country's portion of all international association meetings hosted in the UK rose to 29 per cent this year, with the country's key industries and centres of academic excellence playing a major role in attracting that business. By the end of 2009, more than 330 major

conferences will have taken place in Scotland, including such high-profile events such as: the Forbes European CEO conference at the Gleneagles Hotel, Offshore Europe in Aberdeen, and the British Open Golf at Turnberry. Attracting around 2.31 million business

travellers to the country, adding to the country's popularity is the fact that getting to Scotland has never been easier or more financially competitive. And once in the country, Scotland enjoys excellent rail links with regular train services between each city. With an exceptional choice of low cost

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trips every year, Scotland generates more than £723 million for the economy. Scotland benefits from securing 25 per cent of all international association meetings hosted in the UK, with the country's key industries and centres of academic excellence playing a major role in helping to obtain that business.

airlines flying into Scotland's main airports from the rest of the UK and non-stop services from North America and European routes. Scotland is both convenient and flexible.

#### NEW INVESTMENTS

Scotland is committed to further enhance its





offering as a business and leisure destination, by investing around £850 million in new venues, hotels and services in 2009 alone.

In the north east, The Old Town House at The University of Aberdeen has recently been restored to provide a 'traditionally modern' meeting space, and the new 4-star Malmeson hotel gives a contemporary feel, while further north, in Inverness, more than £30 million has been invested in two flagship meeting and conference developments – Eden Court Theatre and Culloden.

The University of St Andrews offers excellent accommodation at its New Hall and David Russell Apartments accommodating more than 1,000 delegates in the summer months, with the university catering for up to 900 delegates for a conference. Their Gateway centre is a striking meeting venue offering well-equipped meeting rooms in a stunning location overlooking the sea and the Old Course Hotel. The University's latest development due to complete late 2010 is their new School of Medicine and Medical Research Institute. With the construction of this new £45 million medical school based at the heart of its science campus, this unique development will foster and create significant advances in medical research.

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A £13 million refurbishment of Norton House Hotel, near Edinburgh Airport, has been completed, while Greywalls mansion house in East Lothian has been renovated and will open later this year as an exclusive use venue accommodating up to 56 guests in the unique surroundings of a former family home with stunning views over Muirfield Golf Course.

In Glasgow, 2,400 new hotel bedrooms are being created over the next four years, which will further add to the existing first class facilities on offer in the city.

#### CAPITAL GLORY

Edinburgh, the country's capital which boasts many prestigious and unique meetings venues such as Edinburgh Castle, Dynamic Earth and the Edinburgh International Conference

Centre, will see numerous developments take place this year. This spring has already seen Edinburgh-based Apex hotel group open its fourth contemporary four-star hotel in the city's Waterloo Place where the £35million hotel features 187 contemporary bedrooms, a large theatre-style conference suite and five additional meeting rooms. The Apex Hotel group is very environmentally conscious which has led to them winning numerous environmental awards including a Gold award in the Green Tourism Business Scheme.

The Caledonian Hilton Hotel, one of Edinburgh's most famous landmarks, completed phase one of its extensive refurbishment early this year, restoring the hotel's historic façade and refurbishing 86 bedrooms, heralding a new era for this historic hotel. Its multi million

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pound investments are continuing with a phased bedroom refurbishment and the transformation of the hotel's public areas.

The construction of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's new biodiversity and visitor information centre is also well under way by the old West Gate. The John Hope Gateway will offer visitors an unrivalled all-weather interpretive facility. The Gateway will be one of the most sought after venues in Edinburgh.

#### DIVERSE OFFERINGS

Anyone looking for a conference destination that has it all needs look no further than Scotland, which for a relatively small country offers an immense and diverse range of venues and accommodation. Purpose-built conference centres in all major cities, combined with academic venues, plus accommodation options to suit every budget, make planning an event a question of almost too much choice.

VisitScotland's Business Tourism Unit offers a wealth of support to meeting planners and buyers. From a fully-fledged Ambassador Programme that complements the cities' own programmes covering a plethora of relevant sectors, to in-depth knowledge of the best venues, the team is there to help find the perfect solution. And at international Confex this year, VisitScotland's Business Tourism Unit (BTU) will bring together a varied range of partners to demonstrate to buyers just how much choice and value is on offer.

Visitors to Confex should make a note to visit to the VisitScotland stand (B150) where this year the BTU will be joined by the flagship conference centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland's major cities, each with their own distinct personalities and cultures. In addition, Glasgow's five-star Science Centre, complete with IMAX cinema, offers a variety of unusual and exhilarating venue experiences provided within three iconic buildings. Experts from Glasgow City Marketing Bureau will also be on hand to provide exhaustive information on both the city's facilities and those of Scotland's largest urban region.

#### EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

From Edinburgh, two very different venues will feature on the stand. Murrayfield, the historic home of Scottish rugby, will showcase the Murrayfield Experience, one of the largest and most flexible venues in Scotland, where internal and external areas can work in tandem. With facilities for 150-1,200-plus delegates, and the opportunity to hold all or part of events within the main pitch, this is a venue with a very unique twist. The historic Dome, a former banking hall in the heart of the city centre, is a stunning and inspirational setting for events from 20-120, combined with a reputation for fine dining.

Scotland is famed for its castles many of which can be hired for events with a unique backdrop. Historic Scotland, which manages



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properties throughout the country, will display the best – from Edinburgh and Stirling Castles to scenic Urquhart Castle on the shores of Loch Ness in the Scottish Highlands. And finally, the centre of choice for public sector organisations, and the NHS in particular, is the Beardmore Hotel & Conference Centre situated on the banks of the River Clyde near Glasgow. With 158-bedrooms and a brand new Mac in every one, this hotel is a member of the exclusive Conference Centres of Excellence Consortium.

Catrina Anderson, marketing manager, associations for VisitScotland's BTU, is proud of Scotland's appeal for events large and small. She says: "Business tourism is a vital economic generator for Scotland delivering in the region of £723 million each year, with a substantial proportion of that attributable to events which come here from all over the world. In the current challenging conditions, value for money is top of planners' priorities, but we can honestly say that quality is never compromised by price.

"We are confident that our range of venues, combined with our passion for our country and all that it offers, as well as our indigenous expertise in sectors such as medicine, bio-technology, education and many more, give us an unbeatable edge over other locations. Scotland is famed as the home of golf, our cities all boast vibrant cultural programmes, we have team-building activities to suit every audience and there are outdoor activities for the most energetic to the enthusiastic novice, so we offer plenty of opportunities to mix business with pleasure."

VisitScotland's Business Tourism Unit is an excellent first point of contact when planning a conference or event in Scotland. Providing swift and easy access to information on meeting venues, facilities and services in Scotland, the BTU can also give impartial advice and assistance on all aspects of planning your next event.

Free services offered by the VisitScotland Business Tourism Unit include:

- An extensive online venue search
- Introductions to on-site destination management companies, professional conference organisers, and meeting planners
- Impartial advice and assistance to planners
- Site inspections and facility visits
- Scottish support materials for promotional mailings
- Provision of information booklets and guides, including a wide variety of VisitScotland publications

At the time of writing, the finishing touches were being put to some exciting entertainment on the BTU stand, so head there and find out that doing business in Scotland is not just the best way to get more for your money, but can be fun as well.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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