



MAKING MEETINGS GREEN

How Planners and Properties Are Making
Events More Sustainable Than Ever

Presented by

Skift.

+

VENETIAN MEETINGS

THE VENETIAN RESORT | LAS VEGAS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sustainability movement has become a major focus in the global business community. As a consequence, business meetings and events have come under increased scrutiny. This trend is likely to pick up momentum in the coming decade as environmental concerns figure more prominently in political and cultural circles worldwide.

In the meetings and events industry, there's near universal agreement that embracing sustainable practices is both the smartest and the most responsible course of action. Meeting planners are responding to the challenge with increasing vigor and are training their sights on practices that can produce measurable results. They are eager to counter claims that events are wasteful by using proof points that eliminate any concerns about "greenwashing."

Of course, the drive to integrate sustainable practices isn't happening in a vacuum. Event planners are also under pressure to make meetings more compelling for attendees and to contain costs. These goals present natural conflicts, and event planners must continually strive to bring them into balance.

Luckily for meeting planners, more and more venues are taking proactive steps to integrate sustainability initiatives into their operations and event-related offerings. The Venetian® Resort Las Vegas is at the forefront of this trend, having introduced a robust, standards-driven program called the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy. ECO360 helps the resort reduce its own environmental impacts while helping clients address their specific sustainability goals. Planners can leverage ECO360 to create greener events that also increase attendee engagement and enjoyment.

This Skift report describes the various ways meeting planners are addressing sustainability demands and how The Venetian Resort is enhancing and amplifying those efforts.

Electra Cocktail Club in The Palazzo Tower.



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ABOUT SKIFT

Skift is the largest industry intelligence platform providing media, insights, and marketing to key sectors of travel. Skift deciphers and defines trends for global CEOs and CMOs across travel, dining, and wellness sectors through a combination of news, research, conferences, and marketing services.

ABOUT SKIFTX

SkiftX is Skift's in-house content studio. SkiftX produced this report in partnership with The Venetian® Resort Las Vegas.

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EXECUTIVE LETTER

Sustainability has become a huge focus in the meetings industry, as planners are under growing pressure to minimize the environmental impact of their events. That's why we're pleased to share this Skift report on how businesses can make their meetings greener.

At The Venetian Resort Las Vegas, sustainability has been a high-priority strategic initiative since 2010. Our Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy is an enterprise-wide effort to put green practices into place across all of our operations. The strategy comprises four pillars: Green Buildings, Environmentally Responsible Operations, Green Meetings and Events, and Stakeholder Engagement. Because of ECO360, our clients can be assured that their events achieve the highest industry standards for sustainability. To cite just a few examples:

- All of our suites are now equipped with LED lights, and a master on/off switch controls all the lights in each suite.
- All trash is sorted on the back end for composting and recycling, so there's no need for guests to separate their discarded items.
- Leftover food from conferences is donated to local charities.
- Potable water is recycled for use in landscaping.
- Solar panels generate electricity that heats our pools.

We can also customize sustainability initiatives for specific events through our Green Meetings program. Green Meetings clients can tailor components of their events to meet specific objectives related to conservation, recycling, sustainable procurement, and attendee engagement. Clients can even choose to incorporate team-building sustainability initiatives, such as creating hygiene kits for communities in need through our partnership with Clean the World.



Chandra Allison
Senior Vice President, Sales
The Venetian Resort Las Vegas
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By putting sustainability front and center, we can ensure that even our largest events — many of which exceed 10,000 attendees — are minimizing their impact on the environment.

We hope you'll be inspired by the stories and examples in this report, and that they'll help you find new ways to add sustainable practices to your upcoming events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chandra', written in a cursive style.



THE VENETIAN RESORT

LAS VEGAS

*THERE'S A GREAT BIG
WORLD IN HERE*



*WANT THE
WORLD*

INTRODUCTION



Rosina at The Palazzo Las Vegas.

The mood among meeting planners these days is fuzzy. At the most recent edition of IMEX Frankfurt, one of the world's biggest trade shows dedicated to the meetings and events business, planners were by turns excited and hesitant, bullish on the future and guarded about growth prospects. The one thing everyone agreed on? Sustainability in all its forms is sure to be the watchword in the coming years.

"Sustainability has become a stronger focus for the meetings and events sector," [reported](#) Skift's Andrew Sheivachman from the May 2019 event. Leaders in the business, including Don Welsh, CEO of Destinations International, and Mark Cooper, CEO of IACC, said that implementing sustainability initiatives is both the right thing to do for the planet and a business imperative for the sector. "If we're not more sustainability savvy, meetings will become a target of politicians," Cooper told Skift. "No one wants to be like the tobacco companies of the '80s."

One other point of concern? The perception — if not the reality — that events are wasteful, Sheivachman reported. Planners have "raised the concern that greenwashing ... could decrease demand for events in the future, particularly if [sustainability] issues become a political focal point around the world," Sheivachman wrote, highlighting the need for practices that have measurable impacts and quantifiable results.

Indeed the push for sustainable practices — including environmental sensitivity as well as a drive to make meetings more inclusive, more engaging, and more interesting for new generations of attendees — is the foremost challenge for both venues and planners alike, industry sources interviewed by SkiftX agreed.

Yet planners can find themselves in a bind: Their needs to integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) and keep a close eye on environmental concerns are tempered by their mandate to control costs and entice attendees who have ever-rising expectations.

Fortunately, some venues are taking a stand in favor of sustainability and, in the process, making sustainable meetings not just possible but also effective and enjoyable. The Venetian Resort and Sands Expo Convention Center in Las Vegas are on the forefront of this trend: Set in the heart of the Strip, they've implemented a holistic sustainability program known as Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy, which sets targets for environmental as well as community impacts. This standards-based program, promulgated by the resort's parent company, Las Vegas Sands Corporation, lays out goals and obligations to help reduce environmental impacts.

"The program has four foundational pillars," said Chandra Allison, senior vice president of sales at The Venetian Resort. "First, there's Green Meetings and Events. The Venetian Resort hosts thousands of meeting and convention attendees, and we work diligently to offer sustainable food choices, wellness programs, and encourage attendee participation in community projects. The second is Environmentally Responsible Operations, where we make great strides to implement sustainable practices and procedures without compromising the guest experience."

The two other pieces of the program are Stakeholder Engagement and Green Buildings. "As the preeminent developer of integrated resorts, we strive to build high-performance green buildings, considering both the environment and local community when making design and construction decisions," Allison said.

By integrating the four "pillars" of the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy into its operations, The Venetian Resort has enabled meeting planners of all stripes to customize their programming while hitting any sustainability benchmarks they may have.

"[We're working] with meeting planners to curate custom green programs to achieve their clients' individual sustainability goals," said Ashley Behre, manager of brand marketing at The Venetian Resort, emphasizing that accommodating the CSR targets of host organizations is an essential part of today's meetings business. In other words, implementing serious, meaningful sustainability programs is about more than just doing the right thing — it's now a business imperative for cutting edge host venues.

Electra Cocktail Club at The Palazzo.



SPOTLIGHTING THE SANDS ECO360 GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY



Inside the Sands Expo Convention Center during a recent event.

Las Vegas Sands® Corporation is one of the world's leading hospitality companies with 10 properties on two continents that host millions of guests a year. Among the company's flagships is The Venetian Resort, a 7,092-suite integrated resort that's frequently recognized as one of the top properties in the city.

Yet one of the most important initiatives underway at The Venetian Resort isn't the property's cutting-edge culinary program or its successful partnership with Canyon Ranch that puts top-flight instructors and classes right on site. Instead, it's the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy that's having a major impact by putting green practices into place across the board.

"The Sands ECO360 program takes a holistic approach to sustainability," said Allison. "We're constantly looking for ways to change habits that lead to waste generation and work within our communities to drive change. For instance, our Green Meetings Program helps meeting professionals consider environmental, wellness, and community factors when planning an event."

The forward-thinking program represents true leadership in the space: First instituted in 2010, the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy effort has helped make The Venetian Resort one of the country's most energy efficient large conference spaces.

“The Venetian Resort has more than 7,000 suites, features more than 2.25 million square feet of meeting and convention space, and hosts around 50 major exhibitions each year,” said Chef Olivier Dubreuil, vice president culinary operations at The Venetian Resort Las Vegas, and a member of the [Master Chefs of France](#) organization. “With such a massive property operating 24 hours a day, it was imperative that we find ways to minimize our impact on the environment.”

“[So] we developed the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy and aligned it with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals,” Dubreuil said. “The strategy focuses around four pillars: Green Buildings, Environmentally Responsible Operations, Green Meetings and Events, and Stakeholder Engagement. These pillars are then applied to key emerging material issues which are important to both our company and stakeholders.”

By putting meetings and events right at the top of the list, The Venetian can ensure that even the largest gatherings – and there are plenty of functions held at the property exceeding 10,000 attendees – have minimal impact on the environment.

“For us, as a developer and operator of integrated resorts, sustainable growth is not only a smart financial decision, but also a responsible way of doing business,” [said Norbert Riezler](#), senior vice president, chief procurement and sustainability officer, Las Vegas Sands Corporation, in a statement. “But a strategy alone does not make a corporation sustainable, it is people that make change happen.”

Among the efforts that team members at The Venetian Resort have implemented are LED lighting improvements, water-saving initiatives, power-saving programs, and other upgrades that help reduce the impact of events and guest stays. The property has received numerous outside accolades for the work, including Venue Level Two Certification according to [APEX/ASTM standards](#), gold and silver certifications from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Best Recycling Program from Las Vegas Business Week, and the Water Hero Award from the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

CUT by Wolfgang Puck at The Venetian Resort.



THE VENETIAN RESORT LAS VEGAS BY THE NUMBERS

These surprising stats show just how sustainable the mega-property can be.



- **100%** amount of The Venetian Resort's annual electricity consumption that's offset through the purchase of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs).



- **3,000** number of master light switches and guest occupancy sensors at The Palazzo. These make it easy for guests to switch off lights and cooling systems — and for the property to better manage energy usage.



- **50** number of advanced and 120V electric vehicle charging stations available for guests and team members alike across the property. All are free to use. (The Venetian Resort also offers preferential parking for guests and team members who carpool or drive fuel-efficient vehicles.)



- **60%** the overall recycling rate at The Venetian Resort, among the highest in Las Vegas.



- **50 million** gallons of water saved by the property's innovative cooling tower technology.



- **31,500** pounds of soap and bottled amenities donated to the non-profit Clean the World each year.



- **100,000** total number of disaster relief hygiene kits for Clean the World and the American Red Cross that thousands of volunteers assembled at the property in 2018.



- **250,000** pounds of leftover trade show and exhibition materials that have been donated to date to Teachers Exchange, which distributes supplies to schools throughout Southern Nevada.

Q&A: WHY THE VENETIAN RESORT LAS VEGAS HAS MADE SUSTAINABILITY A PRIORITY



Chandra Allison, senior vice president of sales at The Venetian Resort, spoke with SkiftX about making green meetings a priority and the concrete steps that The Venetian Resort is implementing to maintain their leadership in sustainable events.

SkiftX: The Venetian Resort has adopted a multi-pillar sustainability program, Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy. Can you walk us through it?

Allison: We're proud of the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy. This program is designed to help minimize our environmental impact, and it's as important to our company as is our commitment to the comfort and well-being of our guests and team members.

The program has four foundational pillars. First, there's Green Meetings and Events. The Venetian Resort hosts thousands of meeting and convention attendees, and we work diligently to offer sustainable food choices, wellness programs, and encourage attendee participation in community projects. The second is Environmentally Responsible Operations, where we make great strides to implement sustainable practices and procedures without compromising the guest experience. For example, we lead the industry with such initiatives as recycling retention rate and solar thermal systems. Other pillars of our strategy include Stakeholder Engagement and Green Buildings. As the preeminent developer of integrated resorts, we strive to build high-performance green buildings, considering both the environment and local community when making design and construction decisions.

In what ways should the meetings sector be reducing its carbon footprint?

There are a number of factors meetings professionals can consider to reduce the carbon footprint of an event. Groups that want to focus on creating a more sustainable program at The Venetian can work with our Green Meeting Concierges to assist with the entire planning process.

Our Green Meeting Concierges work hand in hand with our clients to understand a group's goals and values, assist with the development and implementation of an action plan, and then provide a post-event impact statement. We see more and more that groups are looking for sustainable options, and as leaders in the meetings industry, we've come up with ways to help them achieve those goals through sustainable food and beverage menus, corporate social responsibility programs, donation programs, and more.

In what other areas of sustainability – beyond environmental – are you making an impact?

The Sands ECO360 program takes a holistic approach to sustainability. We're constantly looking for ways to change habits that lead to waste generation and work within our communities to drive change. For instance, our Green Meetings Program helps meeting professionals consider environmental, wellness, and community factors when planning an event. Through our Honest Food Program, we offer sustainable food and beverage options using locally sourced ingredients and products that reduce our footprint as much as possible. Additionally, we have corporate social responsibility programs that allow attendees to give back to the community. As an example, we've worked with groups to build gardens at local shelters and donate leftover signs and materials for use in community classrooms.

The Venetian Las Vegas has done some incredible work with Clean the World. What can you share about the partnership?

Las Vegas Sands has been a partner of Clean the World since 2011, when a corporate donation helped the organization set up shop in Las Vegas. Through this partnership, our resort collects and recycles soap and hygiene products that are discarded daily by our guests. These reclaimed materials are sanitized and repackaged into emergency hygiene kits. Every year, thousands of Las Vegas Sands team members participate in the Sands Cares Global Hygiene Kit Build with Clean the World. Last year, our team members assembled 100,000 kits for distribution to service organizations worldwide. These kits help prevent millions of hygiene-related deaths a year. Since our partnership began, Las Vegas Sands has recycled 240 tons of waste into more than 2.1 million bars of soap. More and more, groups look to us to help them find ways to make a positive impact within our own community here in Las Vegas while they are attending a meeting or conference. Volunteering

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Last year, our team members assembled 100,000 kits for distribution to service organizations worldwide. These kits help prevent millions of hygiene-related deaths a year.

builds comradery, since there's nothing like standing in an assembly line with your fellow team members, knowing that your collective work will make a positive impact in the lives of others.

In your conversations with meeting planners, what are some of the trends that are top of mind these days?

To remain one of the leaders in our industry, we need to stay on top of the trends – and the wants and needs of our customers – so we have these conversations regularly. A few things we've noticed are groups considering destinations that are focused on sustainability, including innovative food and beverage options; ways to reduce waste streams, whether it's through donation programs or offering more digital capabilities; inspiring attendees to choose healthier options; and helping groups plan programming that gives back to the communities they visit.

Have you noticed a shift among meeting planners in terms of what questions they ask about sustainability and what their purchasing policies demand?

Ten years ago, questions centered on recycling or waste reduction. As our programs in these areas have become more successful and turnkey, our clients are able to explore other areas of sustainability and green meetings. For instance, we find that our clients are much more interested in the food we serve, including

the origin and type of food. That was the genesis of our Honest Food program, which ensures the food we serve is in line with these goals.

Have there been any personal experiences or memories that make you want to “up the game” in terms of sustainability at The Venetian Resort?

My family and I are avid divers, and we’ve seen the impact that plastic is having on our oceans and the environment. Plastic pollution is one of the greatest threats to our oceans. Seeing what it has done to the coral reefs and the oceanic ecosystems is devastating. The Venetian Resort has already eliminated straws in most of our venues and is working to replace single-use plastics with more eco-friendly options. The company’s dedication to sustainability is a great personal motivator and knowing we work with clients who are interested in doing their part while also providing an exceptional meeting for their attendees is really the icing on the cake.

As an organization we continue to push ourselves to become more and more sustainable. The holistic sustainability programs we offer to our clients aren’t randomly chosen. We work closely with our diverse community of team members to find out what’s important to them and those programs are then shared with our clients. We’ve seen great enthusiasm from them to participate. It’s not just a donation to the local food bank or donating leftover materials to classrooms – clients are including their attendees in the experience through hygiene kit builds for Clean the World or wheelchair assembly for Easterseals. Helping clients meet their sustainability goals benefits both the environment and our local community.

We recently announced the commitment to offset 100 percent of the annual electricity consumption at The Venetian Resort and Sands Expo through the purchase of Renewable Energy Certificates. We’re

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The Sands ECO360 program takes a holistic approach to sustainability. We’re constantly looking for ways to change habits that lead to waste generation and work within our communities to drive change.

also creating a comprehensive sustainable seafood program throughout the resort, and we’re working with groups to help them achieve “zero waste events,” which is a request we’re seeing more and more. We’re elevating sustainability standards in our industry and hoping to inspire others in the industry to do the same.

What more does The Venetian Resort have in the works to further make a positive impact on the planet?

We aligned our global 2020 targets with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) and [Science Based Targets](#) methodology, focusing on a six-percent reduction in emissions in addition to offsetting the newly opened resorts; a three-percent reduction in water use; and a five-percent increase in our waste diversion rate. To support these efforts, we’ve committed to 1 million individual Sands ECO360 actions, and we’ve already achieved three quarters of them.

MEETING PLANNERS ENHANCE THEIR FOCUS ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



The Sands Expo Convention Center during Cvent Connect 2018.

With climate change at the forefront of political debates and discussion of travel's impact on the environment top of mind among the industry's thought leadership, it should come as no surprise that companies small and large are thinking hard about corporate social responsibility (CSR). Consider the case of SAP, the global enterprise software company, that employs more than 98,000 people and describes itself as "committed to helping improve lives across our global society" in [its statement of purpose](#).

For Ric Rogers, the director of SAP TechEd Strategy, having a positive on the environment and on host communities alike is a non-negotiable element of contemporary corporate events.

"The mission statement of the company is 'to help the world run better and improve people's lives,'" Rogers said in an interview with SkiftX. "Obviously that can be very broad, but suffice it to say that SAP is dedicated to leaving a positive impact on the earth."

As part of that effort, Rogers said, "we definitely seek out green venues. It is a factor when we make a choice. But we work with all our suppliers to ensure, encourage, and advance their sustainable efforts."

Rogers considers The Venetian Resort a key partner for the annual event, SAP TechEd, that he leads. "Sustainability isn't a pick and choose option for us. Yes, we sometimes need to make sacrifices in running a program. But if you're only doing what's

convenient you're just paying lip service," Rogers said. When it comes to events at The Venetian Resort, "the cooperation in recycling or composting food is as important in utilizing renewable energy. It's their willingness to work with us and our other vendors to be sure we're doing all we can in all aspects that is the most valuable. I don't think I've ever heard anyone [at the property] say, 'We can't do that.'"

"We've been able to work with The Venetian Resort on the expected practices so that we both are making choices to improve success. Sustainability is a two-way street. The onus is on us as much as them – if not more so," Rogers added.

From the perspective of the property, going above and beyond to help clients meet sustainability targets is now par for the course. Through the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy, The Venetian Resort is able to create detailed "impact statements" about any given event. These reports then help organizers offset or otherwise manage those impacts.

Take the example of IMEX America, the major meetings-industry event, which was held in 2018 at the Sands Expo, part of The Venetian Resort. The three-day show gathered [more than 13,000 participants](#) from more than 3,500 companies and 150 countries for tens of thousands of scheduled and impromptu sessions, along with countless activations and Instagrammable moments like a super-sized piano straight out of the movie "Big." Despite the massive scale of the event, The Venetian Resort was able to track a number of metrics on behalf of IMEX and compile them into a post-meeting report summarizing energy use (312,524 kWh), water use (958,414 gallons), recycling rate (93%), and overall carbon footprint of the event (394 metric tons of CO₂). (For context, a round-trip flight between New York and Las Vegas generates about 1.4 metric tons of CO₂ per passenger, according to [Myclimate](#), a non-profit.)

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We definitely seek out green venues. It is a factor when we make a choice.

Ric Rogers, the director of SAP TechEd Strategy

Those details matter to planners, said Rogers, because they allow host companies to offset any "non-green" energy supplies or otherwise account for their activities.

One other program that forward-thinking venues have been deploying are community impact initiatives that empower attendees to make a significant difference in both local and global communities. At The Venetian Resort, for example, meeting planners can easily add a Clean the World activation, thanks to the property's deep partnership with the social enterprise organization that makes it easy for groups to assemble "[hygiene kits](#)" that are then distributed to aid groups. One successful Clean the World event took place during the Cvent Connect 2018 show, held at The Venetian Resort last July. "The Venetian created a hygiene building station, where boxes of products from the hotel's more than 7,000 suites were arranged in assembly-line fashion. Each meeting-goer took a plastic bag, grabbed soap, shampoo, body lotion, and other unopened amenities and the group collectively built over 2,500 kits that then went to Las Vegas' Catholic Charities," [according to a SkiftX recap of the event](#). "Clean the World is one of those partners we work with very closely in order to help give back to our community," said Allison, of The Venetian Resort, about the initiative.

Q&A: A FOCUS ON FOOD AND BEVERAGE, CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY



Chef Olivier Dubreuil is vice president culinary operations at The Venetian Resort and a member of the Master Chefs of France organization. As the head of food and beverage (F&B) for the property, he's on the front lines of making sure fresh, healthy food is always available while keeping an eye on critical issues like food waste and sustainable sourcing. He spoke with SkiftX about the challenges and opportunities in a world moving toward greener meetings.

SkiftX: Many planners think of carbon footprint or energy use as the primary metric of sustainability, but you say F&B needs to be top of mind as well. Why is what attendees eat and drink so central to an event's overall environmental impact?

Dubreuil: Often times when sustainability is applied towards a specific material issue such as F&B, or

in this case culinary operations, the focus may be limited to that department's primary role, such as sourcing sustainable food or creating healthy menus for attendees. But the Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy takes a holistic approach to sustainability and expands the focus to look at other aspects of the material issue.

In the case of culinary operations, as part of our Green Buildings pillar, we may look at our equipment and determine if there are any opportunities to install energy- or water-efficient alternatives. As part of our Stakeholder Engagement pillar, we may engage with the chefs to determine if there are any best practices they can share with regard to energy or water conservation which we can implement into a standard operating procedure.

Similarly, we are continuously looking for ways to lower our waste footprint not only through reducing, reusing, and recycling but also by leveraging behavioral science to change the habits that lead to waste generation in the first place. This year we made it a priority to untangle the complexities of one of our largest operational waste streams, which is food waste. We've doubled down on tracking and measuring our food waste to create more reliable baselines, streamlined kitchen inventory management to reduce over-buying, and even piloted projects in our team member dining rooms to encourage portion control.

In what ways can meeting planners help attendees make better, more sustainable food choices?

We offer a variety of sustainable food choices to all attendees, whether it be at their event or meeting

or at one of the many restaurants found at our resort. Ultimately, the attendees need to recognize that there is an environmental impact to their food choices. One suggestion may be to start small so as not to overwhelm guests – maybe they could choose proteins that have smaller environmental impacts, such as choosing chicken over beef, or they might institute a personal goal, like opting for “meatless Mondays.” Everyone can make small changes to their routine in an effort to live more sustainably; they just need to ensure those changes fit into their lifestyle.

In terms of our Green Meetings program that we offer to our convention and exhibition clients, we have implemented some very interesting initiatives in collaboration with our clients. Among them are

- We’ve developed Water Wise Menus that feature items that use less water. For example, it requires 16 gallons of water to produce one ounce of chicken versus 106 gallons of water to produce one ounce of beef. So we offer the choice to reduce the beef serving size and increase the serving size of water wise vegetables or chicken. Living in the desert, and knowing that it takes 1,000 gallons of water per person per day to produce the food and drinks in the average U.S. diet, this idea came to us naturally.
- We participated in the Blended Burger Project, an annual contest organized by The James Beard Foundation, to make burgers better by blending ground meat with chopped mushrooms in an effort to conserve water as well as to promote healthier and more sustainable food in a convention center environment. Sands Expo Convention Center finished first in Nevada and tenth overall in the nation, and the same blended burgers were also offered in our team member dining rooms. We’re adding the Impossible Burger to our in-suite dining menu this summer.
- We’ve hosted Clean Plate Challenges to encourage attendees to not waste food during banquets.

- We engage attendees by encouraging them to participate in our Green Caffeine Campaign and use their own reusable coffee mugs at all our coffee outlets on property. Attendees could share their feelings and experiences on social media.
- Lastly, The Venetian Resort is also joining forces with suppliers and non-profit organizations like FishWise to identify more sustainable seafood options, better fish farming standards, and improved supply chain traceability.

What are some of the other F&B trends you’ve noticed in meetings and events? And can you tell us how the Honest Food Program at The Venetian Resort addresses the needs of today’s meeting planners?

People increasingly crave new, healthy, and flavorful menu options – and until recently, most banquet-style events didn’t address these trends effectively. But at The Venetian Resort, we’ve launched a sustainable F&B program, called the Honest Food Program, that offers vegan and vegetarian options, gluten-free items, and balanced protein sources.

Our chefs find the best quality product at the best price, while understanding that the product needs to be sustainable and as free trade as possible to reduce our footprint. Because 90 percent of our banquet menus are custom designed, we’re uniquely able to prepare many of our menus from scratch, using seasonal and locally-sourced ingredients and avoiding frozen, canned, and processed foods. And with that reduction in our usage of frozen and canned goods, our chefs have developed healthier menus by producing more food in-house and working with local vendors to develop customized products that are made fresh daily. We’re also using smaller, family-owned businesses – and that allows the chefs to create a clear path from farm to table that is appealing both to guests and the company’s bottom line.

Consumers are increasingly steering clear of processed and GMO foods, and The Venetian Resort is doing the same. For instance, we have 450 standard recipes that we always make from scratch, avoiding processed and GMO foods. We also follow what we call “cook and chill” practices, prioritizing fresh ingredients over frozen and canned foods. Our team abides by the mantra that “environment dictates nutrition,” so we prioritize seasonal ingredients throughout the year. Additionally, we butcher our own meat and fish and make an effort to select fish that is currently in abundance, like mackerel and sardines. And of course we adhere to the principle of “whole animal consumption,” eliminating waste by making efficient and healthy use of all the meat and fish we buy.

Single-use items – particularly plastic items – are a hot topic these days. How is your team working to reduce the amount of garbage and food waste generated by events?

We’re addressing diverse product categories to procure sustainable items that are better for the environment and human health. One of these categories is plastics – and we’re working towards eliminating them where possible or replacing them with eco-friendly alternatives. For events, we have programs in place to minimize single-use items when possible; we’re certainly using reusable cloth napkins, china, and cutlery. However, reusable options may not be conducive to some event types, such as cocktail receptions or large exhibitions. In these cases we have been working with our suppliers to find suitable non-plastic alternatives to be used at these types of events. Although the single-use non-plastic items do contribute to our waste numbers, we feel that they are the more environmentally friendly option, since they tend to break down quicker than plastic. As we speak, we’re executing a broader zero single-use plastics strategy across our resort.



Imex America 2018 at The Venetian Resort.

HOW THE VENETIAN RESORT LAS VEGAS IS LEADING THE WAY ON SUSTAINABLE EVENTS



The Canyon Ranch spa + fitness at The Venetian Resort.

The Venetian Resort is one of the nation's largest event facilities, capable of executing both large-scale events and smaller, boutique functions of all kinds. The overall campus – which also includes The Venetian tower, The Palazzo tower, the Venezia tower, and the Sands Expo Convention Center – has received numerous accolades over the years, including recognition as the world's first venue to achieve APEX/ASTM Level 2 certification for green meeting venues.

The Venetian Resort has also been recognized as a leader in smart facilities by the U.S. Department of Energy, which organizes the Better Buildings Challenge that encourages the use of creative and cutting-edge technologies that help reduce energy expenditures and other negative environmental impacts. During a September 2017 press conference at the property, Pranav Jampani, director of

sustainability, The Venetian, The Palazzo, and Sands Expo, pointed out a number of innovative features that help make the properties a showcase for energy-efficient construction and operation. Among the highlights:

- LED lighting that's saved 3.6 million kWh through the deployment of more than 200,000 bulbs that provide more light while using less energy than traditional or compact fluorescent options.
- One of the country's largest solar-thermal arrays, with nearly 400 panels covering more than 18,000 square feet that produce enough energy to heat all 12 pools on property – plus hot water for all the kitchens in The Palazzo, guest suites on seven floors, and all spa facilities.

- In suites, paint and floor materials that meet or exceed LEED standards; coatings, adhesives, and sealants do, too. Minibars have been upgraded to use just one-third the power they once did, saving another 1.4 million kWh.
- A nanofiltration system that recycles 20 million gallons of wastewater – enough to fill more than 30 Olympic-size swimming pools – for irrigation and other non-potable uses on property, reducing reliance on the existing “water grid.”
- In the Sands Expo Convention Center, existing metal halide fixtures were swapped out in favor of high-bay LED lighting, and a wireless lighting control system now empowers showrunners to automate dimming down to the specific fixture, further encouraging energy savings.
- And in perhaps the most simple yet highly effective step, all 3,000 suites in The Palazzo Tower now have master switches that allow guests to easily shut off all lights and devices in a suite with the flick of a finger. In a resort with more than 7,000 suites, that has an outsized impact.

The focus on sustainability by The Venetian Resort also extends to programming: “There is an interest in sustainable practices, and it has become a secondary topic with event planners, with many considering it a bonus to their programming,” said Becky Martino, director, sales and marketing, Canyon Ranch spa + fitness. “As more companies seek out ways to connect sustainability with each employee, it will become a necessity in their programming. We are fortunate that over four decades, the Canyon Ranch brand has become synonymous with trust in our health and healing practices, and the well being of our guests and communities remains a cornerstone of our DNA.”

That heritage is on full view at The Venetian Resort, where the Canyon Ranch facility offers numerous options for planners looking to impress attendees. “We can help curate a different kind of meeting – a meeting that inspires your participants, encourages innovative thinking, reinvigorates their passion,

and leads to increased productivity,” said Martino. “Whether you’re looking for a relaxing break from the convention rush or for enhanced wellness offerings in your programming space, Canyon Ranch spa + fitness has endless options to chill out and re-energize by offering unique wellness benefits to groups under the professional guidance of Canyon Ranch experts.”

Of course, all those elements are customizable, Martino said. “We offer several programs that can be tailored to fit a meeting or event planner’s vision. For conferences and conventions, we offer wellness enhancements such as stretch or meditation breaks led by our certified fitness instructors and experts, as well as on-location chair massages by our licensed therapists. We organize and lead guided runs and walks along the Strip for groups who are looking for an active way to see the sights and offer personalized fitness classes for those who want to stay close to the resort. For the groups looking for team building activities, we have an impressive two-story indoor rock wall that we often use for group challenges and exercises. And at The Venetian pool, we offer specialized private yoga classes for up to 100 guests.”

For all the effort that venues are putting into sustainability, other elements also matter in the ultimate selection of a given property, said Rogers, the SAP meeting planner. “It’s the dedication to service that sets The Venetian apart,” he said. “The space is great and well thought out. Everything is always clean and functional. The standards are top notch. Those things are all great, and they’re all gratifying. But none of that would matter if I didn’t feel my account representative [at The Venetian Resort] had my event and my customers’ best interests at heart. These programs are large, complex, and stressful. I need to know I have a trusted partner that wants us to succeed even if that means taking more onto themselves.”

“Our guests have an expectation that an SAP event will be well-run and more experiential than our competitors’,” Rogers said. “The Venetian helps us satisfy that objective and leave our guests happy.”

TECHNIQUES TO GREEN YOUR NEXT MEETING

These actionable ideas are drawn from the customizable playbook at The Venetian Resort but can add sustainability and positive impacts to events of any size, at any venue.

- **Create Sustainable Menus**

Utilizing locally sourced and/or organically farmed ingredients is one way to amp up the quality of your food and beverage offering. Sourcing information can also be mentioned on event menus or on-site signage to further bring home the message that ingredients are part of a sustainability initiative.

- **Generate a Post-Event Impact Statement**

Deliver a report that enumerates energy usage, water consumption, recycling rate, and other trackable metrics so that event hosts can offset any impacts they choose to.

- **Integrate Programs That Emphasize Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Offer turnkey programming that helps event hosts meet internal CSR standards and also drive attendee engagement. At The Venetian Resort, for example, guests can build hygiene kits through a partnership with Clean the World, which then distributes those packages to those in need.

- **Mandate a Post-Event Donation Program**

Plan ahead to thoughtfully manage leftover materials. Items like furniture can be donated to community members or organizations, while packaging and other supplies can be recycled or upcycled either internally or with various third-party services.

- **Utilize Sustainable Décor**

Preemptively minimize waste by utilizing sustainable decoration options which can be donated, reused, repurposed, or recycled.

- **Deploy Digital Signage**

Distribute information to attendees through digital screens, which can be updated and reused in perpetuity. At The Venetian Resort, for example, digital signage has been installed throughout the Sands Expo Convention Center to lessen the need for static signage, reduce waste, and improve overall image of events.

Inside the Sands Expo Convention Center at The Venetian Resort.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ At The Venetian Resort Las Vegas, sustainability has been a high-priority strategic initiative since 2010. The forward-thinking Sands ECO360 Global Sustainability Strategy is an enterprise-wide effort that puts green practices into place across all operations at the 7,092-suite resort.
- ◆ The push for sustainable practices — including environmental sensitivity as well as a drive to make meetings more inclusive, more engaging, and more interesting for new generations of attendees — is the foremost challenge for both venues and planners alike. Yet planners can find themselves in a bind: Their needs to integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) and keep a close eye on environmental concerns are tempered by their mandate to control costs and entice attendees who have ever-rising expectations.
- ◆ Trackable, metrics-driven programs matter to meeting planners. “We work with all our suppliers to ensure, encourage, and advance their sustainable efforts,” said one event planner. “Sustainability isn’t a pick and choose option for us. Yes, we sometimes need to make sacrifices in running a program. But if you’re only doing what’s convenient you’re just paying lip service,” he added.
- ◆ Venues, planners, and attendees all share the burden of making meetings more sustainable and ecologically friendly. But venues can play a behind-the-scenes role, said chef Olivier Dubreuil, vice president culinary operations at The Venetian Resort. “We are continuously looking for ways to lower our waste footprint not only through reducing, reusing, and recycling but also by leveraging behavioral science to change the habits that lead to waste generation in the first place,” he said.
- ◆ The Venetian Resort is one of the nation’s largest event facilities, capable of executing both large-scale events and smaller, boutique functions of all kinds. The overall campus — which also includes The Venetian tower, The Palazzo tower, the Venezia tower, and the Sands Expo Convention Center — has received numerous accolades over the years, including recognition as the world’s first venue to achieve APEX/ASTM Level 2 certification for green meeting venues, a significant achievement.
- ◆ No matter the venue, there are ways to make your next event more sustainable. Among the strategies to deploy are creating sustainable menus, generating a post-event impact statement, integrating corporate social responsibility, using sustainable décor, and deploying digital signage.

The Venetian Pool Deck.



ABOUT SKIFT

Skift is the largest intelligence platform in travel, providing media, insights, marketing to key sectors of the industry. Through daily news, research, podcasts, and Skift Global Forum conferences, Skift deciphers and defines the trends that matter to the marketers, strategists, and technologists shaping the industry.

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ABOUT THE VENETIAN® RESORT LAS VEGAS

The Venetian® Resort Las Vegas, The Palazzo, and Sands Expo® are on the forefront of meeting innovation, continually introducing unique experiences and non-traditional meeting venues. The Venetian Resort Las Vegas is the ideal choice for everything from large trade shows to small meetings, with unique services and spaces to serve every need. The fully-integrated luxury resort was built with the needs of business in mind: meeting space is easily accessible and highly configurable, and attendees can avail themselves of countless dining, shopping, entertainment, and spa options.

The resort is also a recipient of many hospitality industry awards, including Forbes Four-Star ratings for more than 10 consecutive years, Cvent's top five meeting hotels in the U.S., and over a decades' worth of Meetings & Conventions' Gold Key Elite and Gold Platter Elite awards. The resort has also long been recognized for sustainability leadership. For more information, please visit venetianmeetings.com.

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