



## Destination Selection - Location, Location, Location

by Nancy J. Wilson, CMP

Does the location of the meeting really make a difference? Absolutely! Choosing a destination that is conducive to the event's purpose and takes into account the location of attendees is the first step in producing a successful event. It is also the first step in producing an earth-friendly meeting.

With this in mind, take a look at the attendees' geographic locations to determine possible sites requiring minimal travel for all participants. Understand why it matters economically, environmentally and for the greater satisfaction of your guests. And then, as always, begin asking questions...

**Is the city served by adequate airlines to allow for just one air flight?** No one really enjoys layovers, changing planes, and extra time to get to a destination, not to mention the environmental considerations. (Mitigating the attendees' travel through the use of carbon offsets will be discussed in detail in the Fall issue of The Daily Plan-It.)

**Is the city's mass transit system adequate? Can the attendees go directly from the airport to their hotels or the convention center?** The ability to jump off a plane, right onto mass transit and arrive at your hotel saves time, money and the Earth.

**Is the city walkable?** One of my favorite stories was told to me by a volunteer conference chair who was visiting the conference city for the first time. He arrived at the airport with his luggage and could see his hotel sign from the airport. Because he wanted to learn more about the city (and because he had been scrunched in a plane too long) he started off towards the hotel with his rolling luggage. Across the airport parking lot he strode only to find a long fence. He walked along the fence until he could find an opening. Once he maneuvered around the fence, he came to a highway with no pedestrian access to cross. Now determined to get there, he scrambled madly across the highway (luggage flying) and he made it to the hotel. After settling in, he decided to explore the city and see what his attendees would experience. Once again, he could spot the convention center sign from his hotel. Because of the busy roads and highway, there was no way to walk to a restaurant, store, or to the convention center.

So, as planners, we must ask not only "Are the hotels within walking distance to the convention center?" but also "can you walk there?"



**Does the Convention and Visitors' Bureau have a list of venues, properties, and suppliers that have environmental practices in place?** Where can you go for a local or organic meal? Which hotels are environmentally-friendly? Can you have tours or off-site events in natural attractions using alternative fuel vehicles? Has this research already been done on your behalf by a CVB who is interested in minimizing the environmental footprint your conference will have on their area?

When sending out the Request for Proposal for city-wide events, include the environmental criteria you have developed. Specify the importance of environmental criteria in the site selection process. Cities that understand the importance of eco-friendly meetings and have prepared a green list will be a more effective partner as you move into other aspects of planning.

**How do these environmental considerations also increase the attendee satisfaction?** Ask yourself as if you were the attendee, "Wouldn't it be a luxury to take just one flight, ride convenient/inexpensive transportation to the hotel and then walk to a local restaurant serving fresh, healthy food for dinner?"

While it is unrealistic to believe that all destination decisions will be made on environmental considerations alone, these factors can be important when choosing between comparable cities. The more cities and venues understand and embrace environmentally-responsible practices, the easier it will be.

Contact the friendly experts at MeetGreen® today to discuss how we can help you make your meeting green.