

Smart meetings

June 2018 • \$5.00



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CENTERS

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11 EMERGING
DESTINATIONS
YOU NEED TO KNOW



Smart Stars

WINNERS

THE BEST OF THE BEST 2018

MEET THE READERS' CHOICE WINNERS FOR BRILLIANT PLACES

One of the most exciting annual celebrations at *Smart Meetings* is the unveiling of our Smart Stars Awards winners. These honors are particularly meaningful because they are selected by you—our discerning readers—based on your experiences all over the world. And each year, more of you participate in the nominating process, thereby increasing the significance and status of the awards.

The 2018 Smart Stars Awards recipients described in this issue represent the best of the best hotels, resorts, conference centers, cruise lines, attractions and more in North America. You selected 79 winners in 25 categories, ranging from Best Conference Center to Best Eco-Green Hotel.

Actually, the Smart Stars Awards fulfills a dual purpose. It is the ideal resource to bookmark for inspiration when planning your next event.

“We are honored and excited to celebrate our Smart Stars Award winners,” said Marin Bright, founder and CEO of Smart Meetings. “Our winners list also serves as a guide. We’ve done the legwork for you—now all of you can utilize it when looking for great places for your events.”

BEST AIRPORT HOTEL

CEDARBROOK LODGE AT SEATAC AIRPORT

Visitors to this environmental refuge in Seattle's Southside may forget they are airport-adjacent. The 2,675-square-foot Summit Auditorium features Dolby Digital Surround Sound and Big Cedar conference room offers views of the surrounding greenery. The 167 guest rooms and Copperleaf Restaurant are awash in local art, craft furnishings and farm-to-table delights.

cedarbrooklodge.com
[@cedarbrooklodge](https://twitter.com/cedarbrooklodge)

GRAND HYATT DFW

The recipe for a productive, Texas-size gathering just might call for 34,000 sq. ft. of modern meeting space linked to a central airport (may we suggest Dallas Fort Worth International Airport [DFW]) with award-winning catering. Add a generous dose (298) of newly renovated, soundproof guest rooms to a heap of easy access to historic downtown Grapevine, AT&T Stadium and Cowboys Golf course, and guests will clamor for more.

dfw.grand.hyatt.com
[@grandhyattdfw](https://twitter.com/grandhyattdfw)

HYATT LAX

This newly reinvented space is unquestionably un-airport. From the midcentury vibe to the 12,000-square-foot pool terrace and stunning views from the penthouse event space, meetings in the 50,000-square-foot conference center oasis, steps from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), one of the busiest airports on earth, can now be both convenient and hip.

losangelesairport.regency.hyatt.com
[@hyattregency_lax](https://twitter.com/hyattregency_lax)

BEST ATTRACTION/THEME PARK

MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM

Have you considered a welcome reception with a view of pulsating jellies? Or a black-tie dinner that includes a presentation on the feeding habits of African penguins? At this multiple-Smart Star-winning, nonprofit conservation and research center in the heart of California's Central Coast, you can leverage the awe and wonder of the natural world to add meaning to any gathering. And, since the aquarium's Seafood Watch program has become the gold standard for ensuring sustainable, ocean-friendly ingredients, the meals are guaranteed to be low on waste and high on wow.

montereybayaquarium.org
[@montereybayaquarium](https://twitter.com/montereybayaquarium)

UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT

Plan on a bleisure-worthy stay, as this resort is back for another Smart Star Award with even more things to do and places to stay. Now home to six hotels, with another one opening in August—Universal's Aventura Hotel—this destination continues to grow in popularity. Universal Studios Florida, Universal's Islands of Adventure, and the new watery delights at Universal's Volcano Bay keep the thrills coming.

universalorlando.com
[@universalorlando](https://twitter.com/universalorlando)

WALT DISNEY WORLD

Add a little meeting magic to your event by hosting it in up to 700,000 sq. ft. of meeting, ballroom and breakout space supported by that famous Disney hospitality and more than 5,000 guest rooms from which to choose. The multi-Smart Star-winning destination in sunny Orlando offers four theme parks—Disney's Animal Kingdom, Epcot, Magic Kingdom Park and Disney's Hollywood Studios, which includes the brand-new Toy Story Land.

disneyworld.disney.go.com
[@waltdisneyworld](https://twitter.com/waltdisneyworld)

BEST CRUISE LINE

CELEBRITY CRUISES

With Celebrity Cruises, you can roll out the red carpet on the deck for a private charter. These luxurious floating resorts sail to more than 300 destinations and feature up to 1,500 staterooms. The newest venue, The Meeting Place, can be found on *Celebrity Edge*. Guests can enjoy meals prepared by a Michelin-starred chef and a selection of 3,000 shore excursions.

celebritycruises.com
[@celebritycruises](https://twitter.com/celebritycruises)

HORNBLOWER CRUISES & EVENTS-NEW YORK

Your group can sail off for sunset-watching aboard a ship and wave to Lady Liberty aboard Hornblower Cruises. The fleet of six luxury yachts offer meeting space, dining and some of the best views of the Manhattan skyline. Hornblower even helps planners find suitable accommodations at nearby hotels.

hornblowernewyork.com
[@hornblowerny](https://twitter.com/hornblowerny)

ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL

Planners can choose more than 275 of Royal Caribbean International's worldwide destinations, and drop anchor on one of 25 ships that feature the fastest internet at sea. The world's largest and arguably most Instagrammable cruise ship, *Symphony of the Seas*, made her maiden voyage in April. Theaters, lounges, an ice rink and solarium can accommodate up to 1,394 attendees. The conference center can hold up to 400 people.

royalcaribbean.com
[@royalcaribbean](https://twitter.com/royalcaribbean)
305-982-2172

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BEST BALLROOM

FAIRMONT DALLAS

With two ballrooms to set the mood, Dallas' premier event address since 1969 has been completely reimagined. The glamorous, 16,624-square-foot Regency Ballroom is crowned with 15—count them, 15—glittering chandeliers draped from soaring 27-foot ceilings and boasts skyline views worth writing home about. For a worldly feel, the 14,453-square-foot International Ballroom pairs a warm glow with fine cuisine and service.

fairmont.com/dallas
[@fairmontdallas](https://twitter.com/fairmontdallas)