

DESTINATION GUIDE | GREATER SEATTLE

AS GREEN AS IT GETS

By John Anderson
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Think of holding a meeting in Seattle and your mind is suddenly filled with images of umbrellas, ponchos and waterproof boots splashing through puddles on yet another of the city's famously rainy days. And while Seattle certainly gets its share of the wet stuff—they don't call it Rain City for nothing—locals will tell you it doesn't rain that much.



Details Dining Comments

[Details](#)
[Getting There](#)
[Not To Be Missed](#)

FAST FACTS

Population 582,174
Altitude 0 ft
Temperature 37°F - 75°F
Nearest Airport Boeing Field

And they're right: it's not even in the top 10 of rainiest U.S. cities (Miami averages 55.91 inches of rain per year, versus Seattle at 37.07), which means you may need to rethink your view of this northwestern gem of a destination.

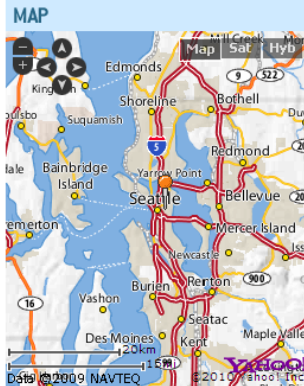
But whether or not you choose to pack extra raingear in preparation for your Seattle meeting, there's far more to the destination than precipitation. The Pacific Rim city has a long and active history with its Asian neighbors, and a prolific trading partnership with China, Japan and Korea through the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma. It's also a city with an eye toward the future, with a host of high-tech companies calling the area home, including heavyweights like Microsoft, Nintendo, RealNetworks and Amazon.com. Boeing has long had a huge presence in the region, while the city has made a strong effort to foster a burgeoning biotech industry.

Of course, one thing Seattle has become famous for over the last 20 years is the ubiquitous coffee outlets that you'll find on every corner of the city. The leader of the pack is, of course, Starbucks, which opened its first store here in 1971 and almost singlehandedly spurred a coffee revolution—complete with fancy lattes and mochas—throughout the country and beyond. The Fortune 500 company is a major player on the Seattle scene, and is just one of the many options for attendees to duck into before a morning meeting or during an afternoon break. While caffeine may help fuel the local tech economy, as well as your meeting, it also may give you that second wind after your event to check out the many cultural offerings the city provides. Besides numerous museums and performing arts venues, music has long been associated with Seattle, especially of the modern variety. From Jimi Hendrix to the many grunge bands that grew out of the music scene here, including Nirvana and Pearl Jam, the city has offered fertile ground for creativity while embracing its local heroes.

This musical legacy is celebrated at the Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame (empsfm.org), which is dedicated to the history and exploration of both music and science fiction, with rock memorabilia displays, technology-intensive multimedia programs and regular exhibits, such as the current Jimi Hendrix: An Evolution of Sound. The unique Frank Gehry-designed center is the brain-child of Paul Allen, the co-founder of Microsoft, and was opened in 2000. It also has a number of spaces available for events, including the state-of-the-art JBL Theater with seating for 191, Learning Labs for up to 70, or access to the entire center for groups up to 3,000.

Besides the city's cultural offerings, attendees will no doubt have the urge to put away their agendas and head for the hills and mountains seen from their windows in nearly any direction. Seattle and the area's towns are surrounded by the waters of Puget Sound to the west and Lake Washington to the east, with regular ferry service to Bainbridge Island and even Victoria on Vancouver Island, B.C. Open the curtains of your hotel room and you might be facing a spectacular view of the Cascade Range and Mount Rainier, or the Olympic Mountains on the Olympic Peninsula to the west. These mountains are ideal for biking, hiking and other outdoor activities, which are popular pastimes for locals and visitors alike, with easy access to many nature areas surrounding the city.

The outdoors are also ideal for group adventures and team-building activities through organizations such as EverGreen Escapes (evergreenescapes.com), which have a number of options for groups such as sea kayaking, white-water



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Meeting Space (Sq.Ft):

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Free Property Info
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Taming Take-Out Chaos
Every office has a few take-out menus lying around—but that's just the problem. Win an artful solution.

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The Smart Mart is coming to Seattle.

Smart Connection
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SWANK AUDIO VISUALS

number of options for groups such as canoeing, white water rafting and flora and fauna interpretation. The company combines concepts on sustainability and eco-friendly practices with challenging adventure and wilderness skills, including adventure races, orienteering and team survival. Despite the many opportunities for outdoor adventure, your attendees won't need to step out into the surrounding nature to notice just how green Seattle is, one benefit to its rainfall and a reason for another of its nicknames—the Emerald City—in reference to the lush evergreen forests of the area. You can enjoy some of this green in several large city parks, or drive just over 30 miles to the east and be surrounded by the tall trees of the Wenatchee National Forest and Snoqualmie National Forest, while across Puget Sound to the west is the expansive Olympic National Forest.

Green is Gold

Once back in your hotel or meeting venue, you'll discover just how green Seattle really is. The city is a leader in the sustainability movement, with eco-friendly practices incorporated into a number of properties. Forbes named it one of the cleanest cities in the country, while the Brookings Institution ranked it as one of the best U.S. cities for the small size of its carbon footprint.

Seattle's Convention & Visitors Bureau's (visitseattle.org) website has a section dedicated to green practices for meeting planner (as well as for locals and visitors) with a checklist and tips to greener meetings. The CVB has also partnered with the environmental firm Meetings Strategies Worldwide for the latest technologies and resources to achieve its green mandate.

You'll find green practices incorporated into the Washington State Convention & Trade Center (wsctc.com), which is the first convention center in the country to offer 100% compostable water bottles, and every year recycles 174 tons of cardboard, 186 tons of mixed paper, plastic and glass, 2,460 pounds of aluminum cans and 12 tons of scrap metal.

Another way to green a meeting or event is for your attendees to take the Link Light Rail (seattle.gov), which opened its first of two stages in July 2009 and includes 13.9 miles from downtown Seattle to Tukwila, as well as a 1.7-mile extension to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (portseattle.org/seatac). They can also hop on one of King County Metro Transit's 236 hybrid buses or 150 electric trolleys.

Downtown Seattle

Set on the eastern shores of Puget Sound, downtown Seattle is roughly two miles in length and a mile wide, starting from Pioneer Square on the south end to the Seattle Center (seattlecenter.com) on the north. This relatively small size makes it easy for attendees to get around, either on foot or via the Seattle Center Monorail (seattlemonorail.com), which runs from the Seattle Center (and through the Experience Music Project building) south along Fifth Avenue to Westlake Center Mall.

"Seattle stands out because of the quality of our convention center, and the walkability and vibrancy of our downtown—the restaurants, shopping, everything is in one compact area," says Jerri Lane, senior vice president, sales and marketing, Seattle CVB. "There's a lot of credit given to the infrastructure of our downtown. San Francisco and Seattle are the two shining stars for having a walkable, dynamic, vibrant experience downtown.

"Pre- and post-meeting is hugely popular in Seattle," Lane says. "We are still a unique destination, and there are many people who haven't been here yet. And I think a lot of people are like 'Wow, I'd like to go to Seattle.' Scheduling meetings here gives people a compelling reason to come," and take advantage of the city's many attractions.

According to Lane, the largest market segment for meetings in Seattle is medical groups and associations, followed by trade associations, business groups and scientific meetings. One such medical group is the American Epilepsy Society, which held its annual conference in Seattle in 2008 with an attendance of around 4,000.

"This particular association definitely likes a progressive city," says Elizabeth Kunsey, CMP, meeting planner for the association, on why they like Seattle. "The convenience of hotels in regard to the convention center is great, and the availability of restaurants. Typically we use three hotels if not four, so the walking distance is important. We have 30–35% of international attendance, and they get together with their colleagues to dine. Just the hub of downtown Seattle fits that well. Some cities don't work as cohesively, so Seattle really works well as a group [with hotels] and not just as individual entities."

Seattle's CVB also took a proactive approach this past year in getting the word out to local residents on the importance of meetings. "We are very proud of our meetings mean business and tourism advocacy," Lane says. "We're the 4th largest industry in Washington State, accounting for 150,000 state jobs and over a billion dollars generated in state and local taxes; the trickle down is pretty amazing. I think Roger Dow is doing a great job in D.C., letting them know what we do and the impact we have. We see that as our mission to tell that story as well."

Meeting Venues

Meeting Venues

First and foremost in Seattle meeting venues is the Washington State Convention & Trade Center in downtown, and a walkable distance to 30 hotels and 8,805 guest rooms. The center offers 205,700 sq. ft. of exhibit space, as well as 61 meeting rooms and ballrooms totaling 105,000 sq. ft., and includes on-site amenities such as coffee shops, restaurants and business services. Groups can also take advantage of the CVB's Citywide Concierge Center, a full-service concierge desk where attendees can make dinner reservations, buy theater tickets, arrange transportation and book personal services.

Coming in July, the convention center will add an additional 50,000 sq. ft. of meeting and exhibit space with The Conference Center, after acquiring and renovating an adjacent building on Pike St. The new center will have 17 meeting rooms and is expected to receive LEED Silver certification.

For a classic waterfront meeting, with panoramic views of the Olympic Mountains, Mt. Rainier and Puget Sound, the Bell Harbor International Conference Center (bellharbor.com) offers 100,000 sq. ft. of meeting space and 18 meeting rooms. Ideal for the tech set, the center features state-of-the-art AV, webcasting and videoconferencing, high-speed Internet, touch-screen control systems and an on-site technology team.

Large citywide groups may well take advantage of the 1,258-room Sheraton Seattle Hotel (sheraton.com/seattle). With 75,000 sq. ft. of meeting space and located one block from the convention center, the Sheraton is the largest hotel in the city. The Westin Seattle (westin.com/seattle) is another option, offering 891 guest rooms and 38,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. There are two relatively new hotels on the scene in downtown, starting with the Four Seasons Hotel Seattle (fourseasons.com/seattle), featuring 147 guest rooms and 10,570 sq. ft. of meeting space. The other is Hyatt at Olive 8 (olive8.hyatt.com), with 346 guest rooms and 11,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. It's the first LEED-certified hotel in Seattle, and includes low-flow plumbing fixtures and a landscaping irrigation system that saves up to 24,000 gallons of water per year.

Unique Venues and Attractions

The most iconic fixture on Seattle's skyline is the Space Needle (spaceneedle.com), built for the 1962 World's Fair and located at the Seattle Center adjacent to the Experience Music Project. Besides offering amazing views of downtown and the surrounding mountains, the Space Needle features the rotating SkyCity restaurant and the SkyLine level, available for groups up to 360. Also located at the Seattle Center is the Key Arena (keyarena.com), available for groups with a flexible seating configuration from 5,500 to 15,500 seats.

Another option for groups is the Seattle Aquarium (seattleaquarium.org), located on the downtown waterfront. Featuring the 120,000-gallon Windows on Washington Waters exhibit, with local sea life from Puget Sound, the aquarium is available for events for groups up to 1,000.

No visit to Seattle would be complete without strolling through the stalls of flowers, fresh produce, T-shirts, local crafts and artwork at Pike Place Market (pikeplacemarket.org). While it may be the most visited attraction in the city, the market is a fun and lively place to experience the local scene, which includes the famous "flying fish" seen careening through the air from one fishmonger to another at Pike Place Fish Market. You can also enjoy a latte at the original Starbucks coffeehouse, the only chain store allowed in the market.

Bellevue

Just across Lake Washington from Seattle is the community of Bellevue. Quiet by Seattle's big-city standards, Bellevue provides groups with a little more elbow room without sacrificing the kinds of options and amenities found in larger destinations, including high-end shops, restaurants and art galleries. A close car or bus ride from Seattle, you'll find plenty of top meeting space here, including the Hyatt Regency Bellevue (bellevue.hyatt.com), which now has 733 guest rooms and 70,000 sq. ft. of meeting space after a \$185-million expansion project completed in July 2009.

The Westin Bellevue (westin.com) is another option, with 337 guest rooms and 25,510 sq. ft. of meeting space, and is located in the Bellevue Collection, which includes upscale shops and restaurants such as Tiffany and Nordstrom. New on the meeting scene is the Meydenbauer Center (meydenbauer.com), which opened last July and offers 54,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including nine meeting rooms and a 410-seat theater.

Greater Seattle

While downtown Seattle is a mere 15 miles north from Sea-Tac airport, head south for 23 miles and you'll soon arrive at the city of Tacoma at the southern end of Puget Sound. An excellent option for meetings here is the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center (tacomaconventioncenter.com), with 136,000 sq. ft. of meeting and event space. A block away is the glass art-themed Hotel Murano (hotelmuranotacoma.com), offering 319 guest rooms and 30,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. Glass art is a theme you'll find throughout Tacoma, which is the home of famed glass artist Dale Chihuly and the Museum of Glass.

...the glass art gallery and the museum of glass (museumofglass.org), offering 6,900 sq. ft. of space for events. "Tacoma is truly inspired by glass art, which can be found around pretty much every corner in the downtown," says Shauna Lunde, CASE, director of sales and marketing at the Tacoma Regional Convention & Visitor Bureau (traveltacoma.com). "The city is a great fit for small and mid-sized meetings. While Tacoma has all the urban amenities of a larger city, its smaller size allows it to focus on hospitality and service. Our meeting planners and conventioners feel like a big deal when they meet in Tacoma," she says.

Going in the other direction from Seattle, the towns of Lynnwood, Everett and Marysville to the north are represented by the Snohomish County Tourism Bureau (snohomish.org). For meetings and events, the Lynnwood Convention Center (lynnwoodcc.com) has 53,000 sq. ft. of meeting and event space, and Tulalip Resort Casino (tulalipcasino.com) in Marysville offers 370 guest rooms and 30,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. While meeting in the area, be sure to sample some classic Washington State wines at the award-winning Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery (st-michelle.com) in Woodinville.

[Back to Top](#)

Getting There

Sea-Tac International Airport (portseattle.org/seatac) is 20 minutes from Seattle and is the Northwest's primary airport. It has direct flights from many U.S. cities, as well as many international flights.

[Back to Top](#)

Not To Be Missed

A daytime stroll through downtown Seattle's historic Pike Place Market

The Seattle Center, home to the Space Needle, Experience Music Project and the Monorail.

A birds-eye view of Seattle (and, on clear days of Mount Rainier) from atop the Space Needle

Enjoying art in an outdoor setting at the Olympic Sculpture Park, which also offers stunning views of the Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound

A history lesson on the early days of Seattle on Bill Speidel's Underground Walking Tour

Wine tasting in Woodinville (30 minutes northeast of Seattle), home to more than 20 wineries

[Back to Top](#)

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