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Loews Sapphire Falls Resort at Universal Orlando, inspired by the Caribbean, features 115,000 sf of meeting space.

With Desirable Weather Year-round, the Sunshine State Reigns Supreme

When it comes to desirable weather year-round, formidable airlift, an almost endless selection of meeting hotels and resorts, and exceptional value, no other statewide destination can rival Florida. That's why the Sunshine State reigns supreme year after year.

Miami

Over the last decade, Miami has evolved into one of the most acclaimed international travel destinations in the world. As a result, it has emerged as one of the most diverse and multicultural places in the U.S. That unique stature, along with its stunning array of new hotels and its widely acclaimed dining scene, has made it a red-hot meeting and incentive destination.

"Our sales pitch is always the fact that Miami is a unique destination," says Illeana Castillo, associate vice president of convention sales at the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"That's a word that is overused, but it really does apply to Miami. First of all, we are a truly international destination that does not require a passport because we're in the U.S. That also means we're easy to get to. We have a wonderful climate that is great any time of the year. And we literally offer something for everyone."

Because of its extraordinary cultural diversity, Miami also delivers what Castillo calls "a unique flavor" in terms of the experience it offers. "There is nowhere else where you can have the kind of experience you have in Miami," she says.

"It is unlike any other place. And a big part of the reason for that is that Miami is a byproduct of so many other cultures from all over the world."

A major factor in Miami's prominence as a meeting destination is its unique and widely celebrated hotel product. Several new hotel brands, including the acclaimed green brand 1 Hotels and the Edition brand from Marriott and boutique hotel king Ian Schrager, made their high-profile debuts in Miami before spreading elsewhere.

Among the most acclaimed of the new hotels opened in the last several years is the exquisite, Forbes Five Star Faena Hotel Miami Beach, built by visionary Argentinean developer Alan Faena, who is completing a Faena Arts District to complement his hotel. The property's interiors, which epitomize old world glamour, were designed by The Great Gatsby movie director Baz Luhrmann and his Academy Award-winning wife, costume designer Catherine Martin. The Faena was named the No. 1 hotel in the world last year by readers of *Condé Nast Traveler*.

"Many meeting planners are always looking for the next 'hot' thing, and what they find is that next hot thing often originates in Miami," Castillo says.

The city's next major hotel opening, scheduled for next year, is the 1,700-room Marriott World Center, which will anchor a 30-acre mixed use project that will feature a dynamic mix of dining, shopping and entertainment.

Among the new hotels that opened last year are a new Four Seasons Hotel & Surf Club in Surfside, north of Miami Beach; an SLS Lux and Hyatt Centric in Miami's Brickell financial district; an Aloft Hotel in Coral Gables, and an Aloft in the upscale enclave of Aventura.

As new hotels open, the Trump National Doral Miami, continues to reign as one of the area's dominant meeting properties, thanks in large part to its sprawling and lush tropical setting. But what sets Trump National apart more than anything else is its four wildly popular championship golf courses, led by the universally acclaimed Blue Monster. The hotel's flagship restaurant, an outpost of BLT Steak, is another major factor in its popularity with discerning meeting groups.



The Sunbroom at the Faena Hotel Miami Beach is quintessential Miami.