The perfect place for business and pleasure!

Think of the perfect conference. Greece is a country with numerous conference facilities, offering a great variety of choices to Conference Organizers. Thanks to their increased specialization, significant know-how and long-time experience, Greek PCOs, DMCs and suppliers related to the Meetings Industry, offer environmentally friendly services of high quality that guarantee the success of every event. A great selection of fully equipped conference venues - as well as convention and meeting facilities - is available all over the country, with capacity to host meetings of up to 7,000 participants. All the halls are fully equipped with state-of-the-art audio-visual facilities that keep up with the international progress of technology, such as wide screen applications, multi-projection systems, LED screen of multiple sizes, etc.

With a Mediterranean ambience and almost 300 days of sunshine every year, Greece harmoniously combines diverse elements such as a long history, a rich cultural heritage, vivacious nightlife, sandy beaches, modern shopping centres or traditional street markets, an immense variety of tastes, beautiful islands, famous archaeological sites, many art and culture festivals all year round and probably more conference destinations than any other country in the world, features that make Greece the ideal choice for any meeting demand.
The Best Deal a Country Can Offer!

Greece is a unique destination that combines business and pleasure in the best possible way! It is one of the most charismatic locations in terms of natural beauty, with mild climate conditions, a combination of landscapes from sea to mountains and appropriate for vacation and conference activities throughout the year!

Currently, a large number of conference centers operate in the country, thus increasing its attractiveness for potential visitors!

Luxurious hotels with services that combine entertainment, leisure areas and excellent conference facilities, constitute yet another powerful incentive for someone to... even close a business deal in Greece!

Moreover, there are innovative scientific centers and exhibition areas that can accommodate small or large scale conference events, with state-of-the-art technical facilities including audiovisual systems, teleconference means, auxiliary dining areas, and by utilizing specialized staff such as interpreters and translators.

At the same time, a number of public and private entities, such as Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVB), are in operation both in Athens and Thessaloniki, while a new National CVB will be soon established, as well as a Metropolitan Conference Center in Athens.

The European Federation of Associations of Professional Congress Organizers (EFAPCO), which includes a large number of founding, associate and supporting members from around the world, has already been promoting the establishment and certification of the PCO profession (Professional Congress / Convention Organizer) in all European countries, a fact that will decisively boost business for the organized conference tourism firms operating in Greece.

At the same time, the Organization of Tourism Education & Training (O.T.E.K.) as well as a large number of private educational institutes elevates the sector's know-how year by year!
Greece, a long time favorite and unrivaled choice in the meeting industry, works its magic offering an appropriate setting for every occasion, due to:

- The excellent climate conditions and rare natural beauty,
- The large monumental and cultural legacy, samples of which can be found in any corner of the country,
- Greek hospitality and high quality services,
- The exquisite Greek gastronomy,
- The modern hotel and conference units both in large urban centers and in Continental and Insular Greece,
- The upgraded image of Greece following the successful organization of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games,
- The specialized human resources that successfully accomplish the implementation of even the most demanding conference events.
Meetings

Greece is uniquely advantaged to compete with the largest convention destinations in Europe. In the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, the country was an excellent host to the biggest sports competition in the world.

With the construction of major infrastructure projects and a transportation network that has safely united the country from mountain to coast, Greece has also made a name as host to a number of important professional, corporate, scientific and cultural events. Thirteen conference centres and more than a hundred hotels at several key destinations including Athens, Thessaloniki, Crete, Rhodes, Corfu, Iguomenitsa, Alexandroupoli, Santorini, Kos, offer state-of-the-art facilities and back-up services of the highest standards.

Above all, the dedicated staff, the warm and hospitable people will offer you an experience always to remember.
With a history that goes beyond 4,000 years, Athens is the most significant tourist destination in the country with visitors that exceed 3 million on an annual basis. A notable portion of tourist traffic refers to urban and conference tourism.

Greece's capital is no doubt the country's financial center, with its industrial areas and the port of Piraeus standing out. The city is traditionally the first stop for tourists before they depart for the famous Greek islands.

The most important "must-see" attractions of the city for the urban and conference tourists are the following:

- The Parthenon and Acropolis
- The ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine monuments
- Many and continuously increasing museums (i.e. New Acropolis Museum)
- The historic center of the city (Plaka, Monastiraki, Thisio, Psyrri, etc.)
- Large department stores

Choosing Athens for conventions, conferences and meetings is a sound investment and a guaranteed success.
The beauty of the North

Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece has been demonstrating significant business activity during the past years. Its prominent position and its enlightening impact throughout the ages have rendered Thessaloniki a point of reference and an economic center for the Balkans. The image of Thessaloniki as a convention mecca is attributed to a large extent because of Hell Expo (Thessaloniki’s International Trade Fair), which is the country’s annual exhibition event each September, transforming the city to an international exhibition center.

The city’s neighboring with the Balkan countries is yet another major factor that contributes to attracting conference tourism not only from neighboring countries but also from the broader Southeast European region. Moreover, both public and private entities in the city have expressed particular will and zeal to promoting conference infrastructure. The establishment of the Thessaloniki Convention & Visitors Bureau (TCVB) placed the city on the global conference map! The TCVB was the first such organization in Greece.

The aforementioned developments had quite impressive results in an almost 8-year period, as from 39 conferences organized in Thessaloniki in 2001, the number grew to 224 in 2007 at the “association market” level (conferences by non-profit organizations, scientific or other entities with local or international scope). If one adds the “corporate market” conferences (conferences organized by companies and corporations), the total increases significantly. The average annual increase of conferences during the aforesaid period is 34%.

The strategy adopted in order to boost conference tourism in Thessaloniki is an excellent “recipe” for success for the entire sector in Greece!
During the past 15 years, the transportation infrastructure in Greece has been significantly upgraded both in large urban centers and in the most important islands, a fact that has contributed further to attracting tourism.

There is a saying that says "there's nothing like a first impression!" The new state-of-the-art Athens Airport "Eleftherios Venizelos" at Spata Attica, which is the first image experienced by the businessman or a tourist when entering the country, leaves the best impressions!

At the same time, the "Charilaos Trikoupis" bridge (Rio - Antirrio), that connects the western Peloponnese with western Greece, is an eye-catching attraction for tourists, as it is one of the largest cable bridges in Europe! Finally, the Attiki Odos motorway constitutes one of the most significant projects for traffic decongestion in the metropolitan area of Athens.

The ability for easy access to convention centers by metro, suburban railway and tram, as well as the upgraded ports of Piraeus, Rafina and Lavrio that are located in Attica – and which connect the country's largest urban center, Athens, with the Greek islands – strengthen Greece's "image" even further. Moreover, airport connections from Athens and Thessaloniki towards all Greek cities and islands is yet another equally important factor towards the country's ongoing tourism development, as well as for its selection as an ideal destination for conference activities in broader South Eastern European region. This easy access network is supplemented by ferry connections between ports located both in continental Greece and the islands, as well as in neighboring Italy, which is the most significant portal – passage towards Greece.

Moreover, the modern Egnatia Motorway, which extends for more than 670 km connects Northwest with Northeast Greece. Under completion are also the last sections of the PATHE road axis that connect the major Greek cities of Patra – Athens – Thessaloniki, while there are direct plans for the construction of Ionia Odos motorway that will cross Western Greece from north to south.
Currently, the country aims at strengthening its market share in global conference events, to a level between 2.5-5% during the next 5-10 years. According to international studies, the Greek conference tourism market is developing with an annual growth rate between 5-7%, which is above the country’s Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.) growth rate and one of the highest in the world.

This fact has reinforced Greece's position on the global conference map, as according to the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA), the city of Athens was recently amongst the top 20 positions for conference destinations from a total of 350 cities.

According to market estimations, total revenue for the sector approaches 500 million euros on annual basis, while conference attendees that visit Greece exceed 150,000 annually. The topics of conferences that take place in Greek cities – destinations, concern medical and pharmaceutical sectors, business and economy, technology and IT, politics – public administration, environment which constitutes a particular promising sector for conference activity, arts and culture, media, physical sciences, industry, etc.

Also, continuous demand is being observed for information regarding the Greek conference product, a fact that is reflected in all research findings.
Greece, as most European countries, has given priority to the crucial and contemporary issue of environmental protection and corporate social responsibility, which deeply concerns both the Greek society and the scientific – business community.

The past year, we have observed a steady increase of conferences in this category and the trend – as is the case nevertheless globally – is expected to continue with the same dynamism during the next 5-year period, featuring not only the professionalism but also the sensitivity of companies on issues that concern the environment and furthermore the society as a whole!

On this basis, Greece supports the promotion of “green meetings” and events, minding in making environmentally friendly choices and proposals.

Conferences in this area include events about the Social Corporate Responsibility of the broader South East Europe held in Athens, the environmental initiatives adopted by Greek corporations, as well as meetings for the exchange of information and ideas in order to boost the corporate society’s sensitivity towards environmental issues and formulate concrete actions to serve society’s best interests.
Greece is the land of history and cultural heritage. As the birthplace of the very first European civilizations – including the Minoan, the Mycenaean and of course the Golden Age of Athens – Greece is acknowledged as the cradle of monumental architecture, sculpture, theatre, philosophy and medicine. Thus, a visit to archeological sites, museums and monuments all over the country, is a unique opportunity of experiencing a fascinating journey into history and arts.

Whereas history meets with progress, Greece is a country with continuous growth and significant business opportunities. Following the perfect organization of the 2004 Olympic Games – which left an excellent impression within the global community – Greece is establishing itself as the ideal choice of destination for hosting conventions, meetings and international exhibitions within the framework of the tourist industry.

Greece is steadily improving its infrastructure, while a modern public transportation system greatly facilitates delegates. During summer, Greek islands are easily accessed by the ports of Piraeus, Lavrio, Rafina, Thessaloniki and Heraklion Crete.
Global and Tailor Made Solutions

Any type of event can be organized here in Greece. From a congress to a seminar, from a product launch to an incentive trip, from a conference to a corporate meeting, Greece offers an appropriate setting for every occasion.

The importance of conference tourism for the Greek Economy is reflected on the founding of the Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers - HAPCO. HAPCO, from 1996 - when it was founded - to this day, continues its mission dynamically, with the aim to represent professional congress organizers as well as companies, offering a broad range of services and products, relevant to the congress market. Over the years, HAPCO, with the essential contribution of its members, has developed into one of the principal institutions in the Greek tourism sector and has been acknowledged as the official partner of the Greek State on issues relating to the meetings industry. The mission of HAPCO is primarily focused on:

- The shielding of the profession of conference organizers on a national level.
- The promotion of its members in the domestic and international congress market through the exploitation of modern communication channels.
- The overall enhancement of Greek tourism and the attraction of international congresses in our country.
- The submission of proposals to the Greek State for planning out the sector’s future and the subsequent implementation of congress tourism policy.
- The provision of current information to Greek professional congress organizers on current trends and developments in the international market.

Useful sites

Hellenic Association of Professional Congress Organizers (HAPCO)
www.hapco.gr
 e-mail: hapco@hapco.gr

Association of Greek Tourist Enterprises (SETE)
www.sete.gr

Hellenic Association of Travel & Tourist Agencies (HATTA)
www.hatta.gr
 e-mail: hatta@hatta.gr

Association of Greek Exhibition & Conference Organizers
www.eesae.gr
 e-mail: info@eesae.gr

Information about City of Athens
www.cityofathens.gr

Thessalonica Convention & Visitors Bureau (T.C.V.B)
www.tcvb.gr
 e-mail: info@tcvb.gr

Greek National Tourism Organisation
www.visitgreece.gr