



Niagara Falls - Falling for Niagara

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With an array of attractions ranging from world-famous waterfalls to casinos, golf courses and wineries, along with a growing portfolio of meeting space, Niagara Falls is sure to please planners.

Niagara Falls, Ontario, and Niagara Falls, N.Y., both center on the falls, but each city offers unique vantage points as well as meetings hotels, off-site venues and group activities, and both are easily accessible by air, car or train. Once attendees arrive, a walk across Rainbow Bridge makes it easy to cross the international border and take in the view from the neighboring country.

Niagara Falls, Ontario

Settled in the 1600s, Niagara Falls, Ontario, boasting unrivaled views of the awesome falls, has been a top North American tourist destination for more than 200 years. Today, the city is a world-class resort town with 16,000 hotel rooms. Within a short drive, the outlying area offers 40 golf courses, 80 wineries and a number of historic sites relating to the War of 1812.

Meetings-wise, impressive new developments are significantly expanding its event capacity and, together with the tremendous natural advantage of being a stone's throw from one of the world's greatest natural wonders, making it a fierce competitor for larger groups.

"Niagara is continuing to grow," says Joyce Morocco, director of sales, meetings, conventions and incentive travel at Niagara Falls Tourism. "In the last 10 years we have seen major growth with over 5,000 more rooms, and we are still expecting another 2,000 rooms in the next year-and-a-half. Soon to open in spring 2011 is our new Niagara Convention and Civic Centre. Meeting planners are finding out about it, and we started booking before they had even hired any staff. We are already very busy with inquiries and RFPs."

The new facility will measure 280,000 square feet, including an 80,000-square-foot, exhibition hall, a 17,000-square-foot ballroom, a 1,000-seat theater and 26,500 square feet of



meeting space, plus a Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Located just 500 yards from the famous waterfalls, the center will be within a one-mile radius of 5,000 guest rooms.

“The development of the convention center, the new hotel rooms and activities such as the development of Dave and Busters will move Niagara Falls into a different level of availability,” says Kerry Painter, president and general manager of the Niagara Convention and Civic Centre and Niagara Falls Tourism. “Until now, the location could only host a few thousand delegates spread through hotel meeting rooms. Now, 10,000 people can be accommodated in a variety of uses in one facility.”

The roomy new facility joins a wealth of large resorts with ample meeting space.

Hilton Niagara Falls Fallsview will soon boast the tallest building between Toronto and New York City. Its new 58-story tower, slated to open in June, will add 500 suites and a top-floor nightclub. The property currently offers 516 guest rooms, 12,000 square feet of meeting space and a rooftop restaurant, the Watermark.

Falls Avenue Hotel and Entertainment Complex offers four interconnected hotels with a total of 200,000 square feet of meeting space. Properties include the 670-room Sheraton on the Falls and the 234-room Crowne Plaza (reflagged from the historic Brock Plaza in 2008), plus attractions such as the 125,000-square-foot Fallsview Indoor Waterpark, MGM Studios, Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood. The 20-acre complex is located across from the falls.

The recently renovated Sheraton Fallsview Hotel and Conference Centre features 402 oversized guest rooms and 40,000 square feet of meeting space. Across the street is the Marriott Niagara Falls Fallsview Hotel & Spa, with 432 guest rooms and 10,000 square feet of meeting space.

The 374-room Fallsview Casino Resort offers 35,000 square feet of meeting space, and entertainment options include 200,000 square feet of gaming space and a 1,500-seat theater staging top-name performers.

Other options include Doubletree Fallsview Resort and Spa by Hilton, with 224 guest rooms and 10,000 square feet of meeting space, and Americana Conference Resort Spa and Waterpark, with 209 guest rooms, 21,000 square feet of meeting space and a 25,000-square-foot waterpark.

Beyond the ballrooms, team building and networking can continue over a round of golf or a



glass of wine.

“There are so many off-site possibilities in Niagara Falls for large or small events,” Painter says. “We can tent one of our many signature golf courses or enjoy wineries outdoors or inside a cask room. How about a spa for a unique experience, or a cooking experience with Anna Olsen, our own Food Network chef? Or just relax and drink Niagara wine at one of the many venues or hotel penthouse suites overlooking the falls.”

Groups of 20 to 200 people can enjoy a 360-degree view of the falls as well as the Great Gorge and the wine country while dining at Skylon Tower. Nearly 800 feet in the air, the tower restaurant offers fresh seafood, steaks and salads.

Shaw Festival Theatre in Niagara-on-the-Falls is a namesake of Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, whose works are its focus, along with plays about his era, the first half of the 20th century. There are three separate venues: the 856-seat Festival Theatre, the 327-seat Court House Theatre and the 328-seat Royal George. Group discounts are available as well as group packages that include theater tours and backstage talks.

The city is anticipating a vast increase in meetings business in the coming years.

“Niagara Falls is going to be a repeat request for attendees and planners,” Painter says. “This is the place people have wanted to bring their groups for so long, and now the opportunity exists. It will be a prominent tier-two destination.”

Niagara Falls, N.Y.

Across the border on the east side of the river, the city of Niagara Falls, N.Y., offers 4,000 hotel rooms and the closest approach to the falls themselves. The surrounding countryside is similarly known for its golf and wineries. Ten minutes to the north, the historic town of Lewiston is a destination known for its many festivals and fine restaurants.

“Niagara Falls is within walking distance of all the downtown hotels, which is a huge selling point,” says Elizabeth Davis, director of sales at the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation. “Attendees can wander down to the brink of the falls during a break or take a jog or walk along one of the many paths within the state park and be right next to the upper rapids. You actually get within 15 feet of the rushing torrents of Bridal Veil Falls.”

Hotel Niagara is in the midst of a \$15.2 million restoration designed to return it to the grandeur of its heyday in the first half of the 20th century. Once the temporary home of Marilyn Monroe while in town to film the 1953 movie Niagara, the property is located



adjacent to Conference Center Niagara Falls. Upon completion, it will offer 193 guest rooms, two restaurants and three meeting rooms with a total of 5,000 square feet of meeting space. The hotel is currently shuttered but slated to reopen by the end of 2009.

The Giacomo boutique hotel is scheduled to open this summer across the street from Conference Center Niagara Falls. The 38-room property will take up several floors of a multiuse Art Deco building.

Both hotels are within walking distance of the falls.

The city's largest meeting space is the 116,000-square-foot Conference Center Niagara Falls. Its offerings include a 32,200-square-foot exhibition space, a 10,500-square-foot ballroom and 22,000 square feet of meeting space. There are 2,000 hotel rooms within a two-block radius.

Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel is the largest meetings hotel, with 486 guest rooms and more than 30,000 square feet of meeting space. Entertainment options range from 4,200 slot machines and more than 100 table games to live performances.

Crowne Plaza Niagara Falls recently renovated its 391 guest rooms. The property offers 17,000 square feet of meeting space, including a 5,000-square-foot ballroom.

Fallside Hotel and Convention Center has 200 guest rooms and 20,000 square feet of meeting space.

One sumptuous off-site option is the Barton Hill Hotel and Spa in historic Lewiston, seven miles north of Niagara Falls. The boutique property overlooks the Niagara River and offers three meeting rooms totaling 5,450 square feet of meeting space as well as a covered terrace with spectacular sunset views. Attendees can also take a break from the agenda in a full-service day spa.

Besides a growing variety of hotel options and interesting off-site opportunities, the city's core value remains its top attraction for meeting professionals.

"We offer affordability and accessibility," Davis says. "Planners are always pleased about the proximity of the downtown hotels to the falls, the conference center and the Seneca Niagara Casino. Their attendees can park their cars and not have to touch them again until they are ready to depart or to head out and explore the rest of our county."