

BestCities welcomes first South American partner- Bogotá

BestCities Global Alliance continues its expansion into new and emerging markets with the announcement that Bogotá, Colombia's capital, will become their first South American partner.

Although a young bureau, the Greater Bogotá Convention Bureau (GBCB) already shows many of the qualities that BestCities look for in a partner, and as a meetings destination the city rates very highly against all alliance criteria including attractiveness, accessibility, front line service, pre and post touring options, infrastructure quality, future investment and value.

"In order to apply for membership into the Alliance, a city must already be recognized as a Destination Marketing Organization with bureau functionalities, or be one that is officially recognized as a future bureau," said Ms Karen Bolinger, BestCities Board Chair.

"Greater Bogotá Convention Bureau impressed us greatly with their enthusiasm and readiness to take on Preliminary Membership so soon after their expression of interest. They have also demonstrated a strong commitment and a willingness to embrace the BestCities Quality Management System in order to further improve their internal processes," said Ms Bolinger.

GBCB enjoys the full support of their city, regional and federal governments to pursue more business for the city as well as a strong leadership in different sectors keen to work with them in attracting more association meetings. I

Internally, the bureau is staffed by a young, motivated and bilingual team, passionate about their city and focused on delivering a high level of customer service and creating memorable experiences for their clients.

Bogotá's confirmation as BestCities' newest partner follows Tokyo's admission last year as the alliance's Regional Affiliate Member and first from North East Asia.

"The inclusion of a South American partner is important not only for our geographical growth but equally for our strategic expansion. This important foothold into another emerging market will enable us to tap into new clients and provide our alliance partners with important business and learning opportunities," said Ms Bolinger.

Bogotá's road to BestCities partnership began six years ago when the former GBCB had the foresight to identify the international association market as a target and started focusing its strategy towards bidding international association events.

When the announcement came three years ago that the city would move forward with a major convention center expansion, they immediately expanded their efforts towards attracting more worldwide events.

Their hard work has paid off and last year they started winning major business with seven international meetings booked and six more in progress. Bogotá is currently ranked #34 in the ICCA world rankings and when the new Bogota International Convention Center “Agora Bogotá” opens in 2016 with the capacity to hold 3,700 delegates they will be on their way to achieving their goal of being one of the top cities in Latin America.

The city also has 17,000 three, four and five star hotel rooms with a plan to put more hotels closer to the convention centre.

Bogotá is responsible for 52% of the tourism that arrive to Colombia; home to 1,423 multinational companies; public institutions and the National Government.

“The world is looking towards Latin America. In the last 20 years, the region has experienced a growth rate in the meetings industry that exceeds the international average, becoming very attractive and with many expansion opportunities,” says Ms Sandra Garcia Giraldo, Executive Director of Greater Bogotá Convention Bureau.

“Economic growth in Latin America has been constant during the last five to seven years, however the only two countries projected to grow above GINI’s* coefficient, are Chile and Colombia: where Bogotá is responsible for 25% of the GNP. Reducing poverty means a growth of a stronger middle class which translates into a new purchasing power with needs of formation and accessing knowledge, networking and technology, all of which are offered by this industry.”

“As a nonprofit private-public organization, we are very concerned in positively contributing to the nation’s development. We have that built in to our mission and work regularly with the city to promote that through the meetings we choose to pursue.

“We are delighted to have been accepted as a BestCities partner and we look forward to continuing to develop and grow our expertise and our industry. With the support of BestCities, we know we have the potential to rise to be one of Latin America’s top meetings destination,” concludes Ms Garcia Giraldo.

**Gini index is the measure of the differences in income and inequality*

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Note to Editors: BestCities is the first global alliance to put in place its own Quality Management System ensuring a consistent level of convention bureau service excellence from all partner cities. BestCities Partners are Berlin, Cape Town, Chicago, Copenhagen, Dubai, Edinburgh, Houston, Melbourne, Singapore and Vancouver. Tokyo is currently a Regional Affiliate Member and will be recognized as a BestCities Full Partner when they are formally inducted in 2015.

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