

## There is Plenty to Do in Salt Lake City

Convention Centers CVBs Destinations

BY CHUCK KAPELKE ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2016



*The Moose Lounge, Salt Lake City*

### Hip bars, nightclubs and restaurants highlight changing vibe

There's nothing to do in [Salt Lake City](#). Believe it or not, that's the slogan of a recent campaign from Visit Salt Lake, the city's convention and visitors bureau. As you might guess, it's a cheeky message meant to poke fun at the past. It wasn't long ago that strict laws influenced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints made it nearly impossible for visitors to purchase alcohol, making the concept of a business meeting in the city seem dry and drab to many people.

Today, [theresnothingtodoinallsaltlake.com](#)—which highlights Salt Lake City's dizzying menu of hip bars, nightclubs and restaurants—shows just how much has changed. Options range from Beehive Pub, with the motto, "Come and exercise your liver!"; to The Moose Lounge, a thumping dance club for the party set; to Finca, a Spanish restaurant serving sustainably, locally sourced produce and meat.

"The fact that we have high-end restaurants and brewpubs is always shocking to people," says Scott Beck, president and CEO of Visit Salt Lake. "The long-held perceptions that you can't get a drink and there's no place to eat here are changing dramatically. The food and beverage culture here is on a scale and scope that is



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unexpected."

Forget the cream: The Salt is **rising to the top among major convention destinations** in the Western United States thanks to expanded options, easy access, relatively mild weather and outstanding recreation. Here are some of the best options that are available for groups in Salt Lake City and surrounding communities.

## Top Group Activities



*Utah Olympic Park, Park City*

Team building often goes hand-in-hand with scream building, and no place is more likely to generate a squeal or two than **Utah Olympic Park** (near Park City), where groups can whoosh down the bobsled track used in the 2002 Winter Games.

To help groups take advantage of the one-of-a-kind thrill rides available, the park's staff has put together ready-made programs such as Dawn Patrol, which includes ziplining, bobsledding and lunch. This still leaves time for an afternoon meeting in a venue such as the warming room for the Olympic Nordic ski jump.

"The Utah Olympic Park continues to blow people away because it's so unique," says Carolyn Creek-McCallister, senior national sales manager of meetings and conventions for the **Park City Chamber of Commerce/Convention & Visitors Bureau**. "It's great for team building, offsite dinners, events and activities."



*Topgolf Salt Lake City*

Another contender for best group-fun provider is **Urban Adventure Quest**, which combines The Amazing Race-style competition with a three-hour tour of Salt Lake City; groups use smartphones to solve clues and complete challenges while visiting spots including Union Pacific Depot, Temple Square and the State Capitol.

**Lagoon** amusement park, located in Farmington, 17 miles north of downtown Salt Lake City, combines more than 50 thrill rides, a water park and Pioneer Village, a re-creation of an old-time Western town. Discounts are provided

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for groups of 25 or more, and corporate gatherings can be arranged in the terraces and picnic areas.

A new addition for groups is **Topgolf Salt Lake City** in Midvale, which has a full bar, DJ and restaurant, all centered around a multitiered, three-level driving range with computerized targets. Certified pros help students develop the fundamentals of the golf swing in a high-energy environment. "It's a driving range on steroids," Beck says, adding that it's a great spot for corporate events, team-building experiences and informal gatherings.

### Best Memorable Dining Options



*The Viking Yurt, Park City*

The Salt Lake region has an array of striking restaurants, but it doesn't get more memorable than **The Viking Yurt**, located in Park City Mountain Resort. Guests take a 23-minute sleigh ride (pulled by a snowcat) to enjoy a four-hour European dining experience inside a yurt. Only open in the winter, this spot typically has just one seating of 40 guests per evening, but private events are accommodated. Viking Yurt's website notes that a professional writer is available to those who would like a custom poem or song written for the occasion.

A different kind of memorable dining experience can be found at **Log Haven**, a nearly 100-year-old log-mansion restaurant at the base of cliffs and flowing waterfalls in Wasatch National Forest. The menu includes options such as juniper-smoked elk carpaccio and blackened bison steak. Group options include Hillside Amphitheater, with capacity for up to 100, and Wasatch Room and Foyer, a rustic room with a fireplace for up to 150.



*Valter's Osteria, Salt Lake City*

For a meal near the convention center, one of the top spots in Salt Lake City is Tuscan-style **Valter's Osteria**, owned by charming Valter Nassi, who is described by The Salt Lake Tribune as "equal parts restaurant impresario and beaming host, brimming with hugs, handshakes and flair." Outdoor dining and a private-event room for up to 30 people (maximum capacity for a buyout is 130) are available. **The Roof Restaurant**, on the 10th floor of Joseph Smith Memorial Building, offers delicious upscale dining. **Tomato's** is a downtown Salt Lake City

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Smith Memorial Building, affords views overlooking Temple Square and downtown Salt Lake City.

Many diverse options for memorable meals are available in Park City; Conde Nast Traveler named it the fourth-best food city in the United States. "Our chefs at our meetings properties, as well as our diverse array of restaurants, pride themselves on serving locally and regionally inspired menus, which change often based on the farm-to-table availability," Creek-McCallister says.

## Top Places to Get Your Drink On

Ever since the Salt Lake region relaxed alcohol regulations, the opportunities for fun group events have expanded significantly.

With a stunning location in Wasatch (about 15 miles east of Park City), **High West Distillery**—billed as "Utah's first distillery since the 1870s"—offers tours, educational whiskey tastings and a light menu of Western cuisine. "This large, impressive venue will delight groups of many sizes, with its views, hospitality, cowboy culture and cuisine, and quality Utah whiskey," Creek-McCallister says.

Nearby, **Blue Sky Ranch** has a "Cowboy for a Day" program, as well as skeet shooting and horseback riding, but neither is recommended for those under the influence!

High West's Park City location is billed as the "only ski-in gastro-distillery in the world," with a full menu of food and cocktails, including many made with the company's signature whiskeys and vodkas.

**Tavernacle Social Club**, near downtown Salt Lake City, has a dueling piano show and bills itself as "the craziest sing-along party in Utah." **The Urban Lounge** bar and concert venue features rotating acts, and is within walking distance of downtown and University of Utah; next door, **Rye Restaurant & Bar**, is an urban chic bar that can hold up to 60 guests for a seated event and 90 for a reception.

For the full brewpub experience, consider an outing to **Squatters Pub Brewery**, which makes a variety of excellent beers and can host groups in its large modern-urban space. Options include The Loft, offering city views and a private bar with capacity for up to 175, and Potting Shed, with large windows that look onto a garden patio.

At **Sundance Resort**, a ski resort northeast of Tahoe that is owned by Robert Redford (who played the Sundance Kid in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, which was partly filmed in Utah), groups will enjoy a visit to historic Owl Bar, which includes fireplaces inside and a fire pit outside. The 1890s rosewood bar was transported to Sundance from Thermopolis, Wyoming, because it was once frequented by Cassidy's Hole-in-the-Wall Gang.

## Best Meeting Hotels



The most lavish hotel in Salt Lake City is **The Grand America Hotel**, the flagship of Grand America Hotels & Resorts, which also comprises The Little America Hotels and Snowbasin, among other properties. A consistent AAA Five Diamond winner, Grand America has 775 luxury guest rooms and includes massive chandeliers, Italian Rose Carrara marble, English wool rugs and 20-foot-high ceilings. The grand ballroom spans 22,813 sq. ft.



Boasting four AAA diamonds of its own, **Zermatt Resort & Spa** is a Swiss-inspired chateau located in Midway, 45 minutes east of Salt Lake City. The 400-plus guest rooms provide alpine views, and there is 65,000 sq. ft. of meeting, conference, performance and exhibition space.

Located midmountain at Deer Valley Resort, near Park City, AAA Five Diamond **Stein Eriksen Lodge Deer Valley** has more than 24,000 sq. ft. of flexible indoor/outdoor meeting and event space. **Snowbird Ski & Summer Resort** has 800 guest rooms and 50,000-plus sq. ft. of meeting space. (See our venue chart on p. 78 for more hotel listings.)

### Best Convention Venues



Located in the heart of downtown Salt Lake City, **Calvin L. Rampton Salt Palace Convention Center** is the biggest of the big, offering 515,000 sq. ft. of contiguous exhibit hall space, which is divisible into nine halls. Services include a 2GB high-speed internet access and wireless system that can accommodate more than 10,000 concurrently running devices. The Salt Palace is located a half-block from the light rail system and is within walking distance of dozens of restaurants, bars, hotels and much more.

Other larger venues include Davis Conference Center—located in Layton, 19 miles north of Salt Lake City—which has more than 70,000 sq. ft. of premium meeting space in an attractive, park-like setting with views of Wasatch Mountains.

Located about 45 minutes from Salt Lake, Ogden Eccles Conference Center comprises David Eccles Conference Center and Historic Peery’s Egyptian Theater, a refurbished movie palace with hieroglyphs and mummies, with total capacity for up to 1,500. Roughly a 45-minute drive south, **Utah Valley Convention Center** in Provo is a LEED Silver certified building with a grand ballroom, rooftop garden and 83,578 sq. ft. of combined meeting, prefunction and garden space.

This “best of” list just scratches the surface. If you spend enough time in Salt Lake, you may find it changes your life.

Consider the example of Brian Savage, director of advancement and logistics for the Parliament of the World's Religions, which used Salt Palace Convention Center to host the largest interfaith gathering in the world, bringing together 11,000 people of faith and spirit from 80 countries.

Coming from Chicago, Savage was blown away by Salt Lake's friendly people, range of attractions, and easy access to nature. "Salt Lake City turned out to be an amazing host," he says. "The reception we received from everyone—from the governor's office to the guy who carries out the trash at the convention center—was so friendly. I was so sold on Salt Lake City, I've decided to move there."

## Top Special-Event Venues



*Tram at Snowbird Ski & Summer Resort, Sandy*

To give groups a taste of the beauty of vast Utah, look no further than **Natural History Museum of Utah** at the Rio Tinto Center, located on the University of Utah campus, near downtown Salt Lake City. The museum is a showcase for the amazing history of the state, and features exhibits on dinosaurs, Native American archaeology, the Great Salt Lake and other topics. It has some seriously stunning event spaces, such as Canyon, a room inspired by the slot canyons of southern Utah that has a three-story glass wall and capacity for up to 340 for a seated dinner.

Another stunning new event venue is **The Summit**, a restaurant and event center located at an altitude of 11,000 feet. Operated by Snowbird Resort and Conference Center, this two-story, 23,000-square-foot facility atop Hidden Peak can accommodate up to 400 guests. "It's one of the most gorgeous venues you've seen in your entire life," Beck says. "It's the first of its kind in Utah."

Catering to groups "from black tie to blue jeans," **The Depot** is a 1,200-seat concert hall with more than 17,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, all within historic Union Pacific Station. Meeting rooms include Blue Goose, with views of downtown Salt Lake City, and Grand Hall, a nearly 7,225-square-foot train depot built in the early 20th century. "It's our version of the House of Blues, and it's rented out for virtually every large convention," Beck says.



Built above the University of Utah's 45,000-seat outdoor playing field, **Tower at Rice-Eccles Stadium** was used as a media facility for the 2002 Winter Olympics. The Tower now offers skybox seating as well as meeting, banquet and reception rooms. The reception area has three levels, each with a view of the Salt Lake Valley and Wasatch Mountains.

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## Great Places to Get Out Into Nature

If you haven't heard, Utah is one of the world's outstanding natural playgrounds, and any visitor to Salt Lake City will appreciate a taste of the great outdoors. Options range from a visit to world-famous ski and snowboard resorts in the winter (think Alta, Snowbird, Park City) to boundless hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding in the summer. You don't even have to stray too far from Salt Lake City: **City Creek Canyon**, for example, can be accessed via a paved trail that starts just east of the state capitol and winds through a wooded canyon for 6 miles.

One of the best options for groups, **Red Butte Garden**, is located just 10 minutes from downtown, in the foothills on the eastern edge of the University of Utah. Its mission is "to connect people with plants and the beauty of living landscapes." The official arboretum of the state of Utah, Red Butte has acres of developed gardens and 5 miles of hiking trails winding through an extensive natural area. Visit in the spring to experience a whopping 450,000 blooming bulbs.

There are onsite spots such as Orangerie and Rose House for smaller meetings and events. The Great Salt Lake is too salty for typical boat recreation, but groups interested in seeing the massive saline sea can visit **Antelope Island State Park**, which has 28,022 acres that serve as home to a variety of wildlife, as well as 25 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.

For a different kind of nature, check out the limestone rock crater at **Homestead Resort** in the town of Midway, a cool spot filled with warm mineral water that attracts soakers and scuba divers alike. The campus-style resort is dotted with cottages and a state-of-the-art conference facility with 13,000 sq. ft. of flexible space.

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## Best Spouse Activities



The most striking attraction in downtown Salt Lake City is also the easiest spouse activity in town: **Temple Square**, the mother ship of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The massive Salt Lake Temple is open only to LDS members of good standing, but has a visitors center and other facilities, such as the Mormon Tabernacle, that are often open to the public. Visitors are greeted warmly by missionaries.

Even visitors who haven't seen all of Salt Lake City will thoroughly enjoy a trip up to Park City, just 35 miles southeast of downtown. It's enhanced with Victorian architecture and fresh mountain air, as well as many unique shops, galleries and restaurants.

"Every event usually has some outing planned to historic Main Street in Park City, whether it's for five people or 500," says Scott Beck, president and CEO of **Visit Salt Lake**. "It is the epitome of a picturesque mountain town."

Creative planners can find all sorts of activities for spouse groups. For example, you could pay a visit to Bill White Farms, an agriculture, education and sustainability center that provides cooking classes, tours and other hands-on experiences.

Salt Lake's **City Creek Center** (pictured), which has received many accolades, has a retractable glass roof, hourly fountain shows, waterfalls and a sparkling creek that runs through the entire project. There are 110 stores and restaurants, including Nordstrom, Macy's, Tiffany & Co. and Coach.

## Major Meeting Venues

### Davis & Weber Counties

#### Courtyard Ogden

Formerly Summit Hotel & Conference Center; located adjacent to Historic 25th Street; 193 guest rooms; new state-of-the-art lobby; indoor pool; more than 17,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

#### Davis Conference Center

Attractive option in Layton, 20 minutes north of Salt Lake City; attached to Hilton Garden Inn Hotel; offers more than 70,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including 18,000-square-foot Eclipse Expo Hall.

#### Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton

Next to Ogden Eccles Conference Center; walking distance to Historic 25th Street; 124 guest rooms; meeting space for up to 40; 35 minutes from Salt Lake City International Airport.

#### Ogden Eccles Conference Center & Peery's Egyptian Theater

Downtown Ogden conference center and historic theater with Egyptian theme; theater was built in 1924 and has been restored to its original elegance; combined 70,000 sq. ft. of event space.



## Heber Valley

### A Homestead Resort



Historic property in Midway; 45-minute drive from downtown Salt Lake City; 125 guest rooms; 13,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

### Zermatt Resort & Spa

AAA Four Diamond, Swiss-inspired chateau in Midway; easy access to skiing; more than 400 guest rooms; 65,000 sq. ft. of conference and exhibition space. spa, two-story waterfall hot tub.

## Park City

### Hotel Park City

Now part of Marriott's Autograph Collection; adjacent to an 18-hole golf course; 100 guest rooms; world-class skiing in winter; 20,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

### Montage Deer Valley



High-end craftsman-style lodge on Empire Mountain; easy access to ski slopes; all 220 guest rooms include gas fireplaces, and patios or balconies; five restaurants; 55,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

### Park City Marriott

Located 1.5 miles from Park City Ski Resort; 192 guest rooms; two excellent restaurants; pool; 11 meeting rooms, totaling nearly 10,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**Stein Eriksen Lodge Deer Valley**

Only Forbes Five Star, AAA Five Diamond property in Park City; recently ranked seventh best destination resort by USA Today; 180 guest rooms; Glitretind restaurant; Mountain Oasis Spa; more than 24,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**The St. Regis Deer Valley**

Ski-in, ski-out high-end property; 174 guest rooms, all with mountain views; two restaurants; bar and lounge; wine vault; infinity-edge pool; 14,500 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**Waldorf Astoria Park City**

Situated at the base of Park City Resort; 175 guest rooms; spa; fitness center; pool; 8,158 sq. ft. of meeting space, including 4,000-square-foot Pavilion; bilevel suites can hold families of four.

**Provo & Utah Valley**

**Provo Marriott Hotel & Conference Center**

Steps from 84,000-square-foot Utah Valley Convention Center; 330 guest rooms; 28,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; easy access to nearby ski resorts.

**Sundance Mountain Resort**

Nestled at the base of 11,752-foot-tall Mount Timpanogos; 95 guest cottages; classes and workshops for team building; 25,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**Utah Valley Convention Center**

LEED Silver certified; located in historic downtown Provo; 83,578 sq. ft. of meeting space, including 19,620-square-foot exhibit hall and 16,894-square-foot grand ballroom.

**Salt Lake City**

**Calvin L. Rampton Salt Palace Convention Center**

Downtown meetings hub; 515,000 sq. ft. of contiguous exhibit hall space and 164,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; 45,400-square-foot grand ballroom divides into 10 rooms.

**Hilton Salt Lake City Center**

Situated in the heart of the city, near Salt Palace Convention Center; 499 guest rooms; three dining options; 24,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**Hotel Monaco**

Boutique Kimpton hotel situated within walking distance of Salt Palace Convention Center and Trax station; 225 guest rooms; nearly 3,100 sq. ft. of event space.

**Salt Lake City Marriott City Center**

Some of the 359 guest rooms provide views of Wasatch Mountains; La Bella Piastra serves continental cuisine with Italian overtones; indoor pool; fitness center; 22,624 sq. ft. of meeting space, divided among 17 rooms.

**Salt Lake Marriott Downtown at City Creek**

Adjacent to dining and shopping at City Creek, and next to Salt Palace Convention Center; 510 guest rooms; Elevations serves urban American cuisine; fitness center; pool; 22,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**Sheraton Salt Lake City Hotel**



Just a few blocks from the convention area; 362 guest rooms; two restaurants; business center; fitness center; outdoor pool; more than 33,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**Snowbird Ski & Summer Resort**

Located in Sandy, 29 miles east of Salt Lake City International Airport; 800 guest rooms; excellent activity options; 50,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

**The Grand America Hotel**

AAA Five Diamond sister property to Little America Hotel; 775 guest rooms; Garden Cafe features American cuisine; 75,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including 35,000-square-foot center courtyard and 22,813-square-foot grand ballroom.

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