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New Year, New York

DESTINATION With a delegate market worth \$5bn, The Big Apple offers endless scope for business travellers. **Andrea Ashfield** finds out more

With its dizzying skyscrapers, iconic museums and fabulous shopping opportunities, New York ticks every tourism box and welcomes an impressive 54 million visitors each year. It has plenty to offer business groups, too, and latest research by official marketing and tourism partnership NYC & Company, shows that corporate travel is on the up, rising from 5.6 million visits in 2012 to 5.9 million in 2013. Delegate spending is also increasing, with a leap from \$4.7bn to \$5bn over the same period. Alongside China, Japan, France and Germany, the UK is among the top international markets frequenting the city.

New York has an enormous range of conference venues across its five boroughs, including the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Piers 92 and 94 and many major hotels. A number of recent and forthcoming openings are also available for hire, including Tavern on the Green, a landmark restaurant in Central Park, which has undergone a major programme of refurbishment and can accommodate between 10 and 1,000 delegates. There's also the Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, which boasts 100,000 square feet of space and panoramic views across the city, or Wave Hill House, a public garden and cultural centre overlooking the Hudson River. In 2015, One World Observatory will open at One World Trade Center, offering space 1,250 feet above street level.

Where to stay

"The vast majority of business travellers will want to stay in Manhattan," says

Philippe Brown, founder of bespoke travel company, Brown + Hudson. "Here, Midtown has the greatest concentration of hotels and, as many large companies are located here, it can often be the best place to stay. However, for a more fun experience, the southern part of Manhattan can't be beaten. Whether it's the Meatpacking District, the West Village or the more laidback Lower East Side, these neighbourhoods provide stunning accom-

modation with exciting options right on your doorstep. Plus, for those with business down on Wall Street, they're very conveniently placed." If your boss likes to walk or jog, The Standard Hotel is a great option, and straddles the High Line elevated park. Creative, fun-loving types may prefer the stylish Gansevoort, while the Crosby Street Hotel in SoHo is a classic yet contemporary choice.

However, accommodation can be costly so early booking is advised. "Average room rates currently stand at £168, versus £134 in London," says Simon Dugan, director of sales at Ian Allan Travel. "We advise PAs to make informed choices around price and location. Pre-paid content available through travel management companies can provide savvy bookers the opportunity to drive down cost without compromising on cancellation dates or losing out to non-refundable options. If you're on a restrictive budget, consider less central properties and take advantage of the subway to avoid midtown traffic. Frequent travellers should consider the air train available from both JFK and Newark, both of which arrive at Penn Station." ■