



Kursaal Interlaken

Meetings Between Lakes and on Mountain Slopes!

Interlaken may not be your usual Swiss destination for an international congress, but it is undoubtedly one of the most memorable and charming. The town is small, but it boasts a stunning scenery surrounded by lakes and mountains that takes people away from that buzzing city lifestyle - which is why the **Swiss Economic Forum** brings its annual meeting to **Congress Kursaal Interlaken** every year.

Located between the lakes of Thun and Brienz, this Swiss commune is one of the country's postcards and a leading destination for outdoor activities due to the huge number of adventure sports available. Surrounded by mountains and lakes - its name means "between lakes" in German - Interlaken is much sought after by tourists all year round, but it is also becoming increasingly popular among delegates and business travellers. With the breathtaking scenery of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau peaks forming part of a UNESCO-protected landscape, the towns and villages around the region are ideal bases for all types of incentive excursions in the rural environment of the Bernese Oberland, or lush events in the lively Interlaken. There, you will be able to experience a tradition of more than a hundred years as a venue for events in the historic rooms of the **Congress Kursaal Interlaken**, a proud member of the **Ten Swiss Convention Centres**, which have hosted countless major conferences and first-class banquets. With 5,000 m² of event space and 19 rooms, the Kursaal Interlaken is a first-rate venue to hold a modern-day meeting thanks to the magnificent historical focus that is interwoven with the ultra-modern vision within the technology planning, sustainable applications and team-building activities. Another major advantage is that you get a full package from a single source, with the local bureau - which is none other than Kursaal itself - taking care of

social programmes, transportation, bookings.

In 2019, the Kursaal celebrated its 160th anniversary, but as we know today, what came afterwards was not much to celebrate. "In 2020, we still tried to capture some events adapted to the new regulations, but in November 2020 we decided to close for the winter in order to apply for economic aid from the government," says **Bea Brunner, Team Leader Sales of the Kursaal Interlaken**. "However, we hosted the first medical congress on 21 June 2021 with a special licence of 300 people in-house and the rest hybrid. Then we started to pick up activity with events at the end of August but still subject to regulatory restrictions, which made the organisation very complicated." The last two winters of the pandemic continued to be difficult, until in the second half of 2022 activity began to show the first signs of recovery... "however, we still had a negative figure in 2022." Much of the reason for the progress that followed was due to the many Swiss congresses that quickly returned to their meeting rooms - in June 2021, for example, they hosted the annual meeting of the **Swiss Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics**. When it comes to event security, they don't credit the pandemic as a reason for implementing security plans, as the venue is used to hosting a lot of political events where the safety of delegates is essential. "Every year we





hold the **Swiss Economic Forum**, where many high-level international politicians are invited as speakers on site. And in March, the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** held its session to approve the Synthesis Report to the Sixth Assessment Report, which was attended by around 650 political delegates from around the world.” Additionally, The Swiss Economic Forum offers different legacy projects, such as the SEF.NextGen, which invites young entrepreneurs aged between 18 and 24 to take part in a camp to exchange ideas with successful start-ups and big names from the business community, and **SEF Academy**, a special programme for young entrepreneurs, junior politicians and scientists.

The CKI Group was reformed in January 2022 by structuring Kursaal Interlaken Holding AG as the parent company of the subsidiaries Congress Kursaal Interlaken AG and Casino Interlaken AG (CI) with new management. “The aim is to position ourselves in the market as the ideal venue for holding general meetings, business gatherings and other events with a more efficient management system.” Another point to be implemented in the future concerns cultural events: “We want to take advantage of our low season for congresses and seminars to hold cultural events in our venue as well. We’ll start with a comedy week in Kursaal Interlaken in February 2024.” Interlaken is not a typical convention city, but is instead made up of three municipalities – Interlaken, Matten and Unterseen – which all together make up around 16,000 inhabitants. **Made in Bern**, the cantonal tourism marketing organisation in the city of Bern, chairs a council of all tourism directors, including Interlaken. On

an operational level, Interlaken has a MICE competence centre that meets four times a year with Made in Bern and all other MICE stakeholders to decide how to market the MICE sector properly. In terms of accessibility, the venue is physically accessible to people with disabilities, with equipment adapted with ramps, lifts and restrooms – and the surrounding hotels also follow suit.

To broadcast a congress anywhere in the world with HDTV projections, LED lighting technology, live streaming or on-demand, Kursaal has the latest lighting, sound, multimedia and conferencing technology, as well as the know-how of a specialised in-house team. “It’s an advantage that we have an in-house technical department, which is always up to date with the latest technological trends, and a good cooperation with partners for technical equipment that we don’t have on site,” says Brunner. Sustainability has also been an ongoing process in reducing the venue’s environmental impact for years. A member of the “Swisstainable” sustainability programme (*read HQ #109*), Kursaal Interlaken draws on the River Aare to cool the auditorium, sources electricity locally in Interlaken from eco-friendly Swiss hydroelectric power stations. The food & beverage supply also follows sustainable standards for sourcing seasonal and regional produce. “The influx of delegates generates clear economic benefits for the local community. We are in a mountainous region and this economic boost can lead to improved infrastructure, increased job opportunities and improved quality of life for residents. In addition, we organise several different Swiss medical congresses, promoting new talents and the latest research findings,” Brunner concludes.

