

# Switzerland Meeting Trophy: A Once in a Lifetime Experience!

Switzerland Tourism had its hands full and set up a competition for event planners and event professionals to immerse themselves in the Alpine country and its MICE resources.

AUTHOR: MANUEL FERNANDES, HQ MAGAZINE MANAGER

Anyone old enough to remember the 90ies Europe-wide TV game show “*Jeux Sans Frontières*” might have some idea of what happened from 16 to 19 June in Switzerland. Seven teams representing UK & Ireland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, North America and the Nordic countries and comprising 80 participants, were called upon to compete for a coveted Swiss trophy, among physical, skill and general culture tests that helped put the Alpine country on the planners’ meeting map. All this with a slight tweak to drive the race through the most stunning scenery and unique destinations Switzerland has to offer. Organised annually by **Switzerland Tourism** – with a brief hiatus due to the pandemic – this audacious and unconventional team rally has become a sure bet for promoting meetings and incentive travel in the country. The invitation was exclusively aimed at managers and planners of agencies specialised in the MICE sector, allowing these professionals to get to know the country in greater depth.

This 2022 edition set out to explore the French cantons of Vaud and Geneva along the shores of Lake Lemman, on a route linking the towns of Villars-sur-Ollon, Montreux, Vevey, Lausanne and ending in the fantastic setting of Geneva. Travelling from mountains through the countryside, from seaside resorts to gorgeous cities, participants had the opportunity to find out the region in a playful way by appreciating the cultural richness, accessibility, leisure and unbeatable quality of Swiss infra-structure. In the end, the North American team managed to overpower the Belgians with a narrow victory. However, we all won by having enjoyed four fantastic days of hospitality, creativity and fun with the Swiss seal of quality.

## Hotels and venues, you should know about:

### Victoria Hotel & Residence

Victoria presents an interesting blend of an Alpine chateau-style with a quiet, pacifying minimalism.

Located in the centre of Villars-sur-Ollon, the Victoria Hotel & Residence has 150 rooms, 2 restaurants with bar, a relaxation and wellness room with indoor pool. Among the various flexible work spaces that make up 4 meeting rooms which can be merged to create one meeting space of 190m<sup>2</sup> and another of 55m<sup>2</sup>, the four-star building has a unique design area equipped with state-of-the-art smart screens and technological tools.

### Chalet RoyAlp Hôtel & Spa

Just a stone’s throw from the Victoria, this chalet boasts 63 stylish rooms and dreamy suites as well as 27 appartements with breathtaking views, and is packed with relaxation options such as spa treatment, fitness and an indoor pool. Just 90 minutes from Geneva, Chalet RoyAlp Hotel & Spa offers six meeting rooms and venues suitable for banquets, team buildings or private receptions. In addition, you will also have at your disposal a multitude of incentive activities such as cocktail parties, cooking classes, wine tasting, yoga classes or outdoor activities.

### Maison de Montagne de Bretaye

Our first Swiss breakfast took place at the Crazy Moose restaurant at the top of the Vaud Alps and it was to-die-for. Owned by Maison de Montagne de Bretaye, this mountain house is now open to private customers with rooms, dormitories and a holiday apartment. The privatization of the premises is possible by request with 110 beds and 160 seats available in the restaurant or on the terrace. They also have a large modular conference room for 20 to 80 seats and a smaller one for 20 seats.

### Fairmont Le Montreux Palace

Perfectly situated in the centre of Montreux, facing the flashy Lake Lemman, this century-old monument has been enchanting visitors since 1906 with its *Belle Époque* architecture, 236 rooms and suites, a range of luxurious offerings and a leading reputation in

Switzerland. In its world-class meeting and event facilities, the hotel offers 15 venues, including executive boardrooms and flexible function rooms with natural light and state-of-the-art technology for meetings and events for up to 1,200 guests.



### Charlie’s World

Charlie Chaplin’s house-museum in Corsier-sur-Vevey seats in the middle of a ten-acre country estate, envisioned to show the personal and artistic side of one of the greatest film icons of all time. Meet the family man in “the Manoir”, embark on a journey through his masterpieces in “the Studio” and take a peaceful stroll through the surrounding gardens. Your guests can get an exclusive experience in one of three event spaces available for seminars, business parties, incentive activities, team building and sit-down dinners.

### The Olympic Museum

Lausanne is the Olympic capital and where the worlds



### Fairmont Grand Hotel Geneva

The second hotel of the Fairmont franchise enjoys a privileged location in the centre of Geneva with a large complex that includes 412 elegant rooms and suites, 3 restaurants, a bar, a lounge and a theatre with capacity for 1,300 people. The hotel also has one of the largest conference facilities in the city: 13 meeting rooms, most with natural light and views of Lake Lemman, which can be adapted for any type of event and accommodate up to 800 guests.



## Montreux Music & Convention Centre:

### From Jazz festivals to International Conferences!

Crossing the stunning landscape between the steep slopes of the Alps and the shores of Lake Lemman, we find a timeless Swiss postcard: Montreux takes us back to its jazz festival and the celebrities who have called it home, but it also plays host to international conferences at the **Montreux Music & Convention Centre**.

You cannot remain indifferent to this place and nostalgic when you leave it. Montreux is centrally located in the European continent with some 150 direct flights at surrounding airports and train connections to a wide variety of destinations. With more than 2500 rooms including standard hotels, palaces and tailor-made venues, the Montreux Riviera is a dream come true with all the necessary amenities to host your event, including short walking distance between venues, refined spaces of *belle époque* architecture and top-notch services.

Among the many festivals, urban legends and major conferences held here, the **Montreux Jazz Festival** stands out as its cultural flagship being one of the most prestigious musical events in the world. From a small, purely jazzy three-day gathering at the Montreux Casino, the annual gathering has turned into an eclectic platform that today features artists from almost every musical style imaginable at the **Montreux Music & Convention Centre (2m2c)**. An 18,000m<sup>2</sup> multipurpose exhibition centre hosting all kinds of professional, cultural and public events on the shores of Lake Lemman, the 2m2c boasts a fully adaptable infrastructure, both modular and multifunctional, and is fully equipped to host most MICE events.

This is the great asset for organisers, exhibitors and visitors, since the venue includes the Auditorium Stravinski – adapted for 450 to 1,650 people for a congress and up to 800 for a gala dinner – and the 900-seat Miles Davis Hall. Its accessibility to hotels, restaurants, shops and the casino makes it a perfect venue for international events, which also include the **International Recruitment Forum**, and the **Geneva II Conference press centre**. During the pandemic, they were never completely closed and managed to maintain a minimum of activity throughout the period. **Rémy Crégut, CEO of 2m2c**, explains: “We tried to explore various possibilities in serving our residents, so we became the headquarters of the Civil Defence task group for two months, a vaccination centre visited by 25,000 people for six months. We were also the meeting room of the city council, and the host of several virtual event stages.”

This has not prevented the convention centre from suffering a particular impact due to the shutting of cultural activities that represent 50% of the overall budget. In the last two years, the venue has received subsidies from



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the Ministry of Culture and from the Canton of Vaud for partial unemployment, a situation that has now normalised as they were able to end both years with a positive balance. Last but not least, this retraction of activity coincided with a possible closure of the centre for renovation in 2019 (now postponed to 2023), so they were already managing the space with a very light team. “We were also very lucky to host two major events as the pandemic began to recede: the **Swiss Economic Forum** in September 2020 and the **UEFA Congress** in April 2021, both with stringent health measures,” says Crégut.

The big question for the future of 2m2c in relation to potential pandemics will be how to improve the air ventilation systems in large concert halls and banquet halls specifically applied to the space. The good news for Rémy is that employees, but also attendees, “have learned to protect themselves when necessary, according to standard procedures and the convention centre’s rulebook.” The management’s goal for 2022 is to achieve 90% of 2019 annual revenues, but more importantly, 2m2c wants to maintain the high level of customer satisfaction that they have continuously sustained since 2015. Of course, their flagship event could not go unnoticed: “The Montreux Jazz festival is not only our biggest annual income but also our biggest promotional vehicle worldwide. During two weeks, 90,000 people attended at least one concert and 180,000 walked into the venue. These are extremely important figures for us!”

Nevertheless, a major setback at this turning point is clearly workforce and talent retention. “Our partners are finding it quite difficult to hire employees back as many of them have resigned from the pandemic. All organisations will have to rest their business models and tweak the way they were running operations,” warns Crégut. This is clearly a problem shared by other convention centres and a huge wake-up call to make MICE industry jobs more attractive in the very near future. About the technological advances and improvements that pandemic pushed forward, the CEO did not stammer: “The new technology for events is all about providing a smart architecture of fibre optic connection to high-speed Internet throughout the building, as well as access to electricity. The second point is to have an in-house partner capable of proposing all kinds of innovative and quality solutions at the right price.”

Thanks to the Montreux City Council and following Swiss environmental policies, the 2m2c was already a smart building when it comes to sustainability. With the renovation project, 2m2c will be able to upgrade and improve the existing technology with solar panels and geothermal energy for the heating system. The ban on plastic bottles is already on its way, but the venue is still working on a major plan with innovative operational solutions.