

Overworked? Exhausted?  
Can't meet the deadline?

Meetings Management Group  
will help you launch the best  
meeting of your career.

MMG will:

- Become a part of your team
- Drive attendance and help you meet budget
- Invigorate your meeting with full management or specific services

You will: Sit back, relax  
and soak in the glory of a  
successful meeting

[www.mmgevents.com](http://www.mmgevents.com)  
[info@mmgevents.com](mailto:info@mmgevents.com)  
703.610.0262

Come partner with us today.

where great meetings begin



## Some Thoughts on International Dietary Restrictions

I remember living in Japan and having a friend who was vegan. He said he only ate white rice because most of the time people just didn't understand his dietary restrictions. For example, they would give him Miso soup, which is made with fish stock. Likewise when I lived in Korea, I had a friend who was vegetarian. I explained carefully what she could and couldn't eat and the waitress nodded and assured us and came back with a dish for my friend. When she looked at it, my friend said "Oh—What is this?" pointing to what looked conspicuously like meat and the waitress replied "It's meat, but it's just a little bit—for flavor".

Even in countries where language is not a barrier nutritional preferences can cause confusion. I had an uncle in Ireland who could not understand why I was eating margarine instead of butter and said "The size of ya, sure you should have lashings of butter on your toast for the pure love of it!"

Janeé Pelletier had some unexpected surprises two years ago when she had a meeting in Florence, Italy. Nearly everything on the menu had pork products in them, even items that were labeled as vegetarian and vegetable dishes. She first assured her hosts that the products were delicious and then worked hard to make them understand that some of her attendees could not eat any meat—even prosciutto!

Planners at Courtesy Associates found that in one country they had to increase their budget to include bottled water throughout the day since the tap water was not recommended. They also had to be careful with fruits and vegetables washed in tap water and the ice cubes. In case they forgot and drank iced tea, they had a bottle of Pepto Bismol in their supply kits.

To learn more about international dietary restrictions, go to [www.etiquetteinternational.com/Articles/TableOfferings.aspx](http://www.etiquetteinternational.com/Articles/TableOfferings.aspx). The information may surprise you! •

—by Anita Cerana  
National Convention Sales Manager, St. Louis CVC

## The Reins in Africa

What do Windhoek, Maputo, Kampala, Arusha, and Kigali have in common? They are all cities in Africa and planning a meeting in each one of these destinations presents an unprecedented set of challenges. Here are some key points to consider when planning a meeting in Africa:

- **Relationships are worth more than your contract.** Building good relationships with suppliers always helps more in-country than the most detailed contract. It is important to have at least a basic understanding of the local culture. Knowing key words or phrases in the local language goes a long way to building relationships.
- **Yes can mean no, maybe, and sometimes yes.** Understanding the culture helps you pick up on subtle indicators to determine what "yes" really means.
- **A picture is worth a thousand words.** If you suspect your vendor doesn't understand what you need, send a detailed photo or diagram of a poster board in advance.
- **Cash is king.** This includes everything from supplier payments to attendee spending. It is not uncommon for ATMs to be out of money or not operable. In addition, credit card payments are complicated in most African countries, so it is essential to know standard business challenges associated with local credit card payments.
- **Be local.** Help attendees appreciate the local culture by incorporating local food and beverage into the menu. Make sure to sample, but most food and beverage options in these countries are different and delicious!
- **Support the local economy.** Consider printing your program in-country. Trust me—you won't want to rely on shipping. But if you must ship, it is essential that you

know and trust your in-country shipping broker.

- **Expect the unexpected.** Each country will provide unique challenges and solutions. Do not assume that because something did or didn't work in one country that it will be the same for the next.

Establishing in-country relationships and being flexible are two of the most important factors in planning successful African meetings. With help from your DMC and other partners, your African meeting will be unforgettable for all of the right reasons. •

—by Lauren Deaton, CMP,  
Senior Meeting and Event Manager, Courtesy Associates