

St.Gallen: A premier MICE destination empowered by the University of St.Gallen

Differentiation in the MICE world: why St.Gallen stands out

“Where is the famous library?” – This phrase, woven into the newly awarded musical composition “Echoes of the Cathedral” by Théo Schmitt, alludes to St.Gallen’s jewel: the Abbey Library. Premiered at the Tonhalle on 8 March 2025, the piece offers a sensory exploration of the monastery district through sound, transforming the space into an immersive experience. A creative product staging, but not the only one: in the pandemic year of 2021, the internationally renowned St.Gallen-based fashion house Akris transformed the Abbey Library and the monastery courtyard into an eye-catching catwalk – while Paris, Milan, and New York stood still, St.Gallen made a bold creative statement.

This perfectly encapsulates how St.Gallen can position itself in the competitive MICE destination market: through inspiration and innovation – rooted in a unique cultural identity. In particular, the University of St.Gallen (HSG), a globally renowned institution with significant international influence, enhances the city’s status as a MICE destination. In addition to academic excellence, it offers innovation, economic networking, an inspiring campus for talent development and a thriving community. **St.Gallen is first and foremost a vibrant, innovative university city.** It is precisely this symbiosis of academia and business, international reach, and authentic urban life that creates a distinctive MICE experience – convincingly different.

The University as a catalyst for MICE excellence

With more than 1,000 events per year, the University of St.Gallen serves as a dynamic MICE platform with a significant impact on the entire region. HSG’s events promote knowledge, networking and inspiration in line with the university’s mission: **Empowering talents, inspiring leaders.**

Two top student-organized events with international appeal shape St.Gallen’s MICE sector: The **St.Gallen Symposium** in May connects leaders from business, politics, and academia with over 400 companies and 300 universities to develop solutions for global challenges.

The **START Summit** in March, Europe’s largest student-led conference on entrepreneurship and tech, brings together more than 5,000 start-ups, investors and talents.

Both events foster innovation and create synergies with key MICE players such as the St.Gallen Bodensee Convention, the Olma Messen and the Einstein Hotel. The University of St.Gallen, with its events, campus and vibrant community, strengthens the city’s position as an attractive MICE destination with high added value – driven by innovation and future trends.

Emerging trends in the MICE industry

The MICE sector is undergoing a significant transformation, shaped by trends that place **customer centricity, hybrid formats, and experiential orientation** at the forefront. Today’s events are about crafting **immersive, meaningful, and flexible experiences** that align with attendees’ **expectations and values**. The fusion of digital and physical elements allows for **dynamic, personalised engagement**, thus making each event **unique and impactful**.

A key development is the increasing importance of **experiential elements**, where business and cultural components merge into **holistic well-being and leisure concepts**. **Sustainability** is another key driver, reflected in climate-neutral event solutions, but also in **responsible resource management, and community-building initiatives** that extend beyond the event itself. The result is an enhanced sense of **authenticity**, created through both structured and spontaneous moments, which fosters deeper connections between participants and their surroundings.

In this context, **content-driven visits** have emerged as a game changer. Events now go beyond the traditional conference settings and actively integrate the hosting city and its cultural fabric. The question “What do you learn outside the conference?” has become increasingly relevant, reinforcing the idea that an event is only one component of a broader,

enriching experience. **Authenticity** and unexpected inspiration drive engagement and ensure that attendees leave with more than just business insights – when they leave, they take with them a **sense of place, its identity and community**.

Innovative, connected, and convincingly different – the red thread as a symbol of MICE identity

St.Gallen has a forward-looking MICE philosophy, with the HSG pioneering its development, making the city a premier hub for knowledge-driven and innovative events. As a hub for **thought leadership and research excellence**, the university attracts top talents, international scholars, industry experts and innovative thinkers, enriching local and global events with cutting-edge insights. In addition, its strong ties to the **business and start-up ecosystem** ensure that fresh impulses flow into conferences, thus reinforcing St.Gallen’s position as a centre for intellectual exchange and professional networking.

The city’s compactness further enhances the MICE experience, making event planning **stress-free and highly sustainable**. Whether an event is staged at the **University of St.Gallen** with its unique campus landscape and remarkable art collection, at the **Holzweid Executive Education Center** with its striking architecture and seminar-perfect infrastructure, or at the **Olma Messen**, Eastern Switzerland’s premier exhibition and congress venue – everything is within a 15-20-minute walk from the city centre.

Above and beyond its historical sites, St.Gallen offers various sources of inspiration that range from **the Sitterwerk and the Art Museum and Culture Museum to the St.Gallen Municipal Theatre and the Drei Weieren** ponds with stunning views over the city and Lake Constance, just a short walk or funicular ride from the Abbey District or Einstein Hotel.

A key highlight in this ecosystem is the University of St.Gallen’s campus, a striking symbiosis of **nature, art, architecture, and intellectual commitment**. Designed as more than just a venue, it serves as a catalyst for creativity and innovation. The journey to the campus itself is an experience: visitors can reach the campus via the **Climate Steps**, an HSG sustainability project, in just 15 minutes from the city centre. The journey leads through the **Kirchhofer Park**, past gigantic **mammoth trees and sculptures by Alicia Penalba**, to the brutalist **masterpiece by W.M. Förderer**. Here, powerful architecture meets world-class art: works by **Miró, Giacometti**, and contemporary in-



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stallations such as **St.Galler Clicker** by Lewis Davidson (2023) provide exciting artistic impulses. Inside the library, **Gerhard Richter’s** monumental work attracts visitors’ attention, while the path continues to the campus’s innovative core, culminating in **SQUARE**, the university’s visionary hub designed by Sou Fujimoto. This space fosters interaction, creativity, and learning in an environment where “giving and taking inspiration” becomes an organic process.

St.Gallen proves that a MICE destination doesn’t need to be a metropolis. Its university adds a USP: **knowledge, innovation and inspiring spaces**. Together, the city and the University of St.Gallen shape the future of event experiences. The latest campaign video by the St.Gallen Convention Bureau highlights their seamless connection, embodying the **MICE identity of St.Gallen: high value creation, accessibility, global reach, science-driven inspiration, innovation, tradition and sustainability**.

The University of St.Gallen holds the so-called ‘Triple Crown’, the three most important international accreditations in its fields of expertise (AACSB, AMBA and EQUIS). In addition, HSG regularly achieves high positions in relevant business school rankings. Particularly noteworthy is the top position in the FT Masters in Management Ranking, which HSG held for 12 consecutive years.

