

MEET IN... Frankfurt

First-class air links and accommodation and a wide range of venues make Frankfurt a fine choice for events, says **Jenny Southan**

Power meetings

Last year, more than 4.3 million people went to Frankfurt for a meeting, incentive, conference, trade fair or exhibition, far outnumbering the local population, which is only 700,000 (plus 300,000 commuters who travel in daily for work).

Major annual events include Euro Finance Week in November and IMEX in April, although the number of large-scale conventions has been going down (from 285 in 2013 to 225 the following year). Smaller meetings, on the other hand, are on the up, accounting for 80 per cent of 70,000 gatherings a year.

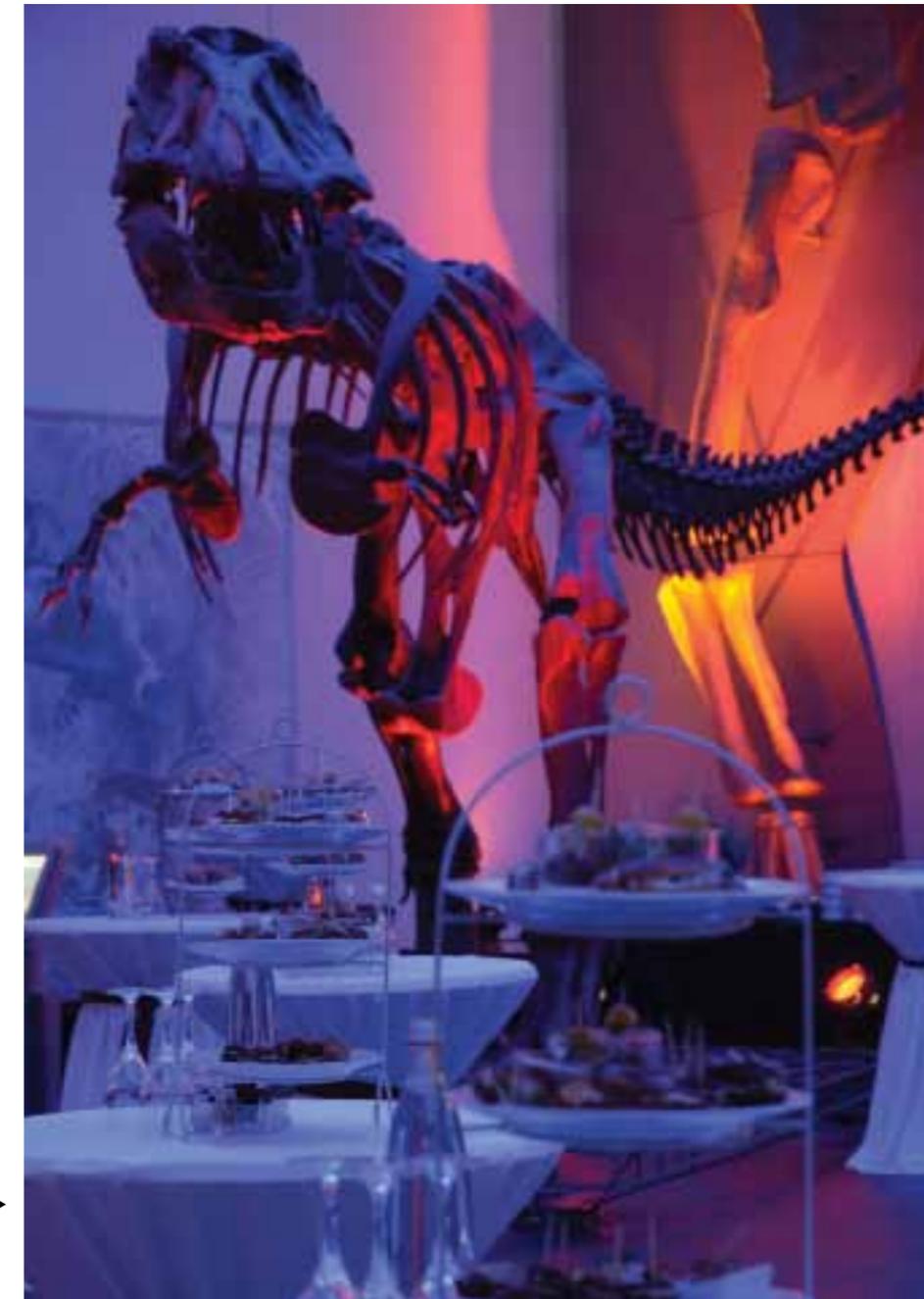
According to airline data provider OAG, Frankfurt airport connects 296 city pairs with 100 airlines. In July, it saw 660 flights in a single day – last year, 55 million people travelled through the hub. The airport is only a 20-minute drive from the city centre, making it easy to whizz in for a day trip or overnighter.

With almost 270 hotels providing 43,900 beds, Frankfurt is well set-up in terms of accommodation. Many have attractive facilities for meetings as well – the 217-room Jumeirah, for example, has a 250-capacity ballroom decorated with 105,000 crystals, plus a spa and fine-dining restaurant.

Other international hotel brands in the city include Intercontinental, Hilton, Sheraton, Rocco Forte, Wyndham, Movenpick, Radisson Blu and Marriott, with more coming soon. Capri by Fraser opened a four-star aparthotel property in August by the Messe Frankfurt trade-fair ground, while a Sofitel is due to be launched on Opernplatz next year.

If you are organising an event in the German city, here is a selection of venues – some with optional incentive activities – to inspire you. ▶

Right: Senckenberg museum





LUFTHANSA FLIGHT TRAINING CENTRE

Just outside Frankfurt International airport, Lufthansa's Flight Centre is primarily used for training 75,000 pilots and cabin crew a year, but many of its facilities can also be privately hired.

There are 40 meeting rooms, each holding 22 delegates, although more unusual gatherings can be held in the Service Training Area, where crew learn how to serve food and drink to passengers. Two fuselage mock-ups each hold 30 people and can be used for presentations via the in-flight entertainment screens, while four cabin set-ups seat about 20 "onboard" A340s and B747s.

Even more exciting is the 1,000 sqm Emergency Training Hall, which has real aircraft on hydraulic stands. Here, crew learn how to conduct evacuations in 90 seconds. Guests can do taster programmes, putting on life jackets and oxygen masks, and can also visit the A380 simulator, which is engineered for "digital evacuations".

The hall seats 400 delegates for dinners and product launches, and there is even an indoor pool for "sea survival" training that can be set up with life rafts. A private entrance at the back can be opened for red carpet welcomes, and hostesses in Lufthansa uniforms can give out "boarding cards" with company branding on.

A second building houses 21 cockpit flight simulators for every aircraft in Lufthansa's fleet (groups of three to four people can have a lesson), and a conference room for 50 delegates theatre-style.

**Airportring, Gate 24;
lufthansa-flight-training.com**



PRO TOUR/ALFT GMBH



SQUIRE CONFERENCE CENTRE

There is no more convenient place for power meetings than the Squire Conference Centre (part of Regus serviced offices), which is directly connected to the airport's Terminal 1 on the fifth floor of the Squire shopping centre. Open since 2012, it has 28 function rooms arranged along a corridor that lights up like a rainbow when the sun shines through its interior-coloured windows.

Rooms range from 15 sqm to 228 sqm – all come with Vitra furniture, Nespresso machines, Sharp TVs and snack menus, while bigger ones have drop-down screens, translation booths and Bose audio technology. Those facing outside look on to the airport (soundproofing is excellent), while the others are illuminated by the mall's atrium. There is also a Polycom video-conferencing suite and a couple of lounges for breakouts. Catering can be arranged.

**The Squire, New Work City, Am Flughafen;
thesquire-conference.com**



HAPPY LANDINGS FLIGHT SIMULATIONS

This isn't a big venue but frequent flyers will love it. While the ground level of the warehouse can host dinners for 50 people, informal buffets work best. Half of the group can eat and mingle while the others learn to fly in professional-grade flight simulators – there is a C172 Cessna, an A320, a B737 and two F-16 fighters. Trained pilots teach you how to take off and land, and you can select the route you want to fly to anywhere in the world. There is also a 16-seat boardroom.

Happy Landings is open daily to the public but can be booked 24/7 for events – 90 per cent of hires are by IT companies, consultancies and banks. As the facility is located 15 minutes outside the city centre, there is plenty of parking space and no noise restrictions on late-night parties.

Heinrich-Lanz-Allee 10; happy-landings.org



KLASSIKSTADT

Take the Hanauer Landstrasse north from Frankfurt East, where the European Central Bank has opened a new HQ, and you will pass car dealerships from every major manufacturer. In an industrial district to the left is Klassikstadt. The historic red-brick building used to be a tractor factory, and later printed money, but was converted into a mixed-used venue in 2010. Inside are automotive companies, workshops for Lotus and McLaren, and showrooms and luxury garages for 400 cars.

While the first floor houses modern and classic models for sale from the likes of Bugatti, MG and Triumph, the second level features privately owned vehicles that sit behind glass. These "garages" are accessible by owners at any time. What's fun is that event organisers can book one of three meeting rooms for 15 to 80 delegates right next to them and have breakouts in the large corridor, allowing guests to admire them over coffee. (The most expensive is a 2.8-litre red Porsche RSR – worth €3 million.)

The biggest space is on the ground level – at 350 sqm, it can host up to 750 people for receptions. There are concrete floors and bare brick walls throughout, but display cars can be organised to liven things up. One end of the room is raised, with doors leading to a terrace for 150 guests suitable for barbecues or aperitifs. A 2,000-capacity tent can be erected in the car park next to it. There is a smaller terrace on the first floor, and a restaurant on ground level. For incentives, there's a Porsche simulator, and a racetrack can be set up for a mini Goodwood.

Orberstrasse 4a; klassikstadt.de



ROMERHALLE

Situated in the bustling Altstadt (Old Town), where stalls sell *frites*, *bratwurst* and spit-roast beef, Romer is the city's historic City Hall and home to the mayor's office.

Renovated in 2012, there are five spaces for hire. Romerhalle, which opens on to the main square, features vaulted ceilings, stone columns and whitewashed walls, and seats about 100 for a banquet. The adjacent Schwanenhalle is similar in design but a little larger. It opens on to a peaceful courtyard with a fountain and open-air spiral staircase dating back to 1627.

On the lower level, but still with daylight, is an expansive cellar with a large kitchen and space for 200 guests. It has the feel of a German beer hall so would be well suited to lively bashes. Tucked away at the back is the 89 sqm Kapellchen, with stained-glass, religious statues and starry frescos.

Romerberg 23; frankfurt.de

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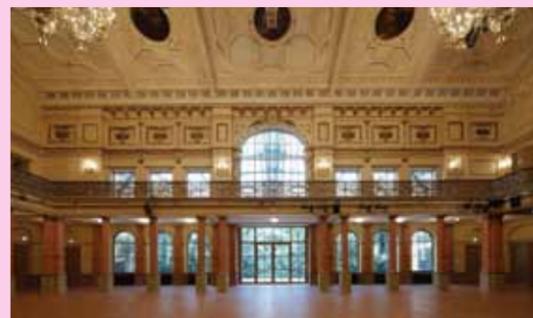
www.frankfurt-convention-bureau.com

SENCKENBERG NATURMUSEUM

One of Germany's largest natural history museums, just up the road from the Festhalle Messe convention centre, the Senckenberg can be booked for gatherings after hours. The two biggest rooms are on the ground floor and interconnect – the back one, housing the bones of whales and elephants, accommodates 300 people for dinner, while the other seats 180 beneath the jaws of a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Both spaces are pillar-free.

A smaller side room, which exhibits the fossils of ancient sea creatures, can be used as a bar or for product launches. Ceilings are high and light comes through a circular glass roof. Catering can be organised through local hotels such as the Maritim or Intercontinental.

Senckenberganlage 25; senckenberg.de



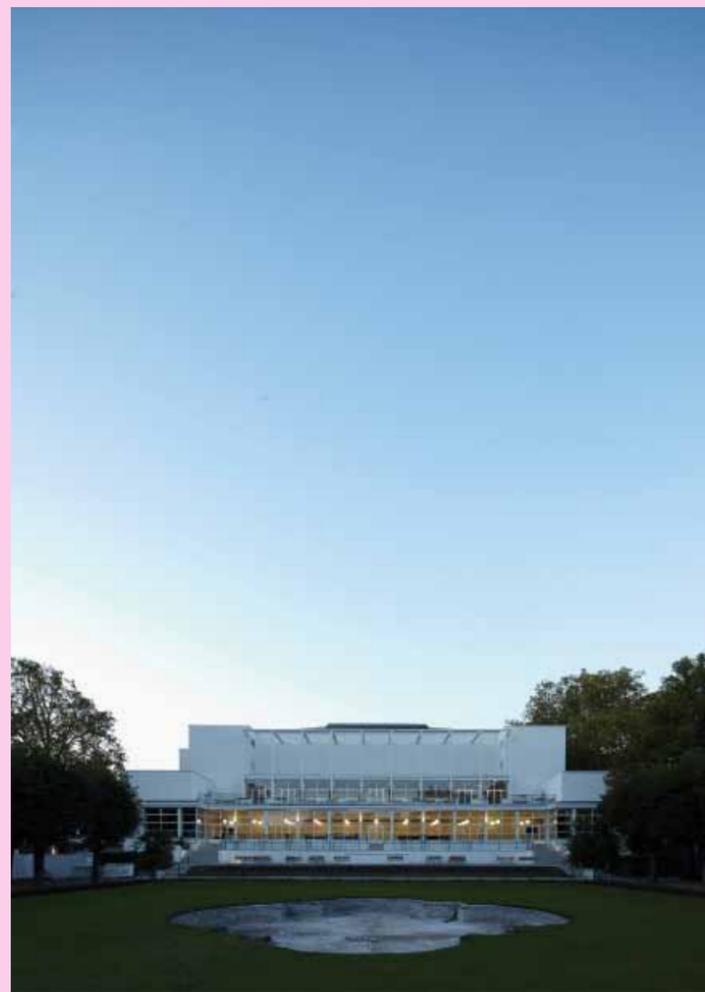
GESELLSCHAFTS HAUS PALMENGARTEN

Around the corner from the Senckenberg museum is the striking Gesellschafts Haus, a dedicated event venue fronted by an expansive lawn and backed by verdant botanical gardens. It originally opened as a dancehall in 1870, with a more contemporary Bauhaus frontage added early last century. The entire property was restored three years ago.

The glass-walled 1920s section runs the width of the venue and has a gourmet restaurant, a spacious foyer and an outdoor terrace. Behind, you walk back in time to the ornate 675 sqm ballroom. In total, the two spaces can host 2,000 people. There are parquet floors, golden candelabras, frescos, columns and doors that open into a vast greenhouse full of exotic palms and plants, with a patio that can be used for a 100-person soirée in the evening.

Upstairs is a 246 sqm mezzanine gallery and a banquet hall for 100 people. Two modern function rooms have sizeable terraces for al fresco events of 120 people each. All catering is done on-site.

Palmengartenstrasses 11; palmengarten-gastronomie.de



KAMEHA SUITE

This late 19th-century sandstone mansion, located between the gleaming towers of Deutsche Bank and UBS, used to house the offices of insurance company Allianz. In the early noughties it underwent an extensive renovation, transforming it into a high-end dining and event venue with many original features.

A central welcome area with a bar sits beneath a light-filled marble atrium, with sweeping staircases to the left and right. Anything from acrobats to cars can be hung from the glass roof.

The upstairs bar and restaurant can accommodate 150 delegates for a banquet, while an outdoor summer deck holds the same number for a reception. There is also an 80 sqm boardroom and a private lounge for 40 guests standing. Take over the whole venue and you can host 700 guests for drinks.

If you want a 360-degree virtual tour, Google was set to visit over the summer to photograph the neoclassical interiors for its Business View platform.

Taunusanlage 20; kamehasuite.de



■ Visit Frankfurt Convention Bureau's website for more information: frankfurt-tourismus.de/messe



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