

planner's pick

EMILY GALLENTINE
Account Executive
Monumental Meetings
Atlanta, GA

RIVIERA MAYA

**SOME GROUPS WANT MOTHER NATURE
TO FEEL FOREIGN, BUT NOT THE FOOD**



Ideas are going around the table for this year's corporate incentive program. Your top producers want something different this year, they implore, something exotic.

Just not too exotic, they add.

You want something you can afford, but at the same time something preferably elegant, understated and refined. Free booze all day long? You betcha!

"A lot of our attendees have been to Cancun so they're comfortable with Mexico, but the Maya Riviera was something new and exciting to them," says Emily Gallentine, a planner with Monumental Meetings. She brought a 48-member incentive group from a Fortune 500 company to **Secrets Capri Riviera Cancun**. The upscale, all-inclusive resort lies near the small town of Playa del Carmen, about one hour south of Cancun, on one of Mexico's most stellar beaches.

"Everyone absolutely loved Playa del Carmen," she exclaims. "It's how Mexico should be, not over-commercialized. You don't lose Mexico there...."

The attendees stayed busy, finding their inner Kahlos during art classes on-property. They shopped in "Playa" and went golfing outside Cancun. The big hit was the adventure outfitter Selvatica, featuring a jungle canopy tour with the longest zip lines in North America. Attendees flew through the air on a pulley rope system before dropping 20 feet into large *cenotes*—water filled caves. They navigated an extreme ropes course together, rode mountain bikes and bounced around in Pinzgauer Austrian Army trucks.

"Selvatica is an excellent vendor, highly recommended," says Gallentine. "We have a lot of success with green activities and indigenous excursions where people can interact more with local culture."

COZY BELLIES, COZY HEARTS

Gallentine raves about the variety of Secrets Capri's F&B options, including Japanese, seafood, Italian and Mexican cuisine, and the martini lounge. The Secrets brand is well-known for catering to the American market with US food brands, which is important she says since the first thing she always hears about from attendees is the food. And then there's the value inherent in the all-inclusive pricing model.

"We wanted a higher tier all-inclusive resort because we didn't want attendees having to grab their wallets all day long," she says, "and the one price up front is very appealing from a corporate standpoint."

Another benefit was the couples-only policy. The benefits typically are a quieter, more hoochy koochy atmosphere. For Gallentine, there's another. "A lot of incentives are couples-only, but we've found that when there are kids at the resort, some of the parents start feeling a little guilty," she says. "We also make sure everyone has lots of options for fun things to do. I was really proud of my group for being so adventurous."

secrets.com, rivieramaya.com

**"IT'S HOW MEXICO SHOULD BE, NOT OVERCOMMERCIALIZED.
YOU DON'T LOSE MEXICO THERE..."**