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# Suitable Venues for Discreet Meetings

*Finding the right location for a bit of blue-sky thinking is far from impossible. You just need to know where to look*

By JEFF MILLS

It's one of those meetings where senior executives need to lock themselves away, shielded from eavesdroppers and unwanted distractions, until they have come up with a workable plan. And you are the lucky one. You've been handed the task of finding a suitable, and discreet, venue for the forthcoming brain-storming session.

Or perhaps the organization is looking for a slightly bigger conference venue, somewhere with not only the right business facilities but enough good-standard accommodation for all your senior people, not to mention some decent bars and restaurants nearby for when work is done.

The office itself can be ruled out. There would be too many distractions, not to mention too little privacy. The same is true for some of the better-known hotels. They may be welcoming and luxurious but there's no guarantee that walls don't have ears. Charter a yacht, perhaps? But then communications may be too difficult and, in any case, it may send out the wrong message. Nobody wants to be accused of swanning off on a cruise at a time of economic uncertainty.



Finding the right location for a bit of blue-sky thinking, not too close to the office and not so far away that it's tricky to reach, can seem a difficult task, but it's far from impossible if you know where to look.

If you are based in the U.K., or elsewhere in Europe for that matter, London could be a good starting point. How about the aptly named Chairman's Quarter Suite at 51, Buckingham Gate ([www.51-Buckinghamgate.com](http://www.51-Buckinghamgate.com)), close to Victoria Station, with direct access to the Gatwick Express for anyone traveling in from overseas.

The high-security signature suites, which can be accessed via an off-street entrance, can be linked up with a state-of-the-art executive boardroom for up to 16 people. You even get the services of a private butler and chefs if you choose.

Or there's the Metropolitan Hotel on Old Park Lane ([www.metropolitan.como.bz](http://www.metropolitan.como.bz)). Even though the hotel is undeniably well known and a favorite of the beautiful people, it is quite possible to hide away for days in the "Met Space" area,

Monte-Carlo S.B.M  
One of 10 meeting rooms at Monte Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort.

in its own wing on the third floor, designed to suit roundtable discussions, boardroom-style meetings and lunches for up to 14 people.

It is interconnected to the "Met Studio" to provide a private break-out space for refreshments, where privacy and discretion are on offer. When you do feel like reappearing in public you can always pop down for dinner at the hotel's famous Michelin-starred Japanese restaurant, Nobu.

If Manchester suits your organization better than London, the Malmaison ([www.malmaison.com](http://www.malmaison.com)) near the city's Piccadilly station could fit the bill. Here you will find a private dining room, ideal for groups of up to 10 people. You even get the free use of Internet-enabled computers. And when work is over you can enjoy the buzz of the Brasserie and bar right in the hotel.

If you and your colleagues prefer to get away into the countryside, however, there's the Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire ([www.fourseasons.com/hampshire](http://www.fourseasons.com/hampshire)), where the style is that of a Georgian manor house set in beautiful gardens, yet only about a 30-minute drive from Heathrow.

There are boardrooms for up to 26 people and plenty of leisure activities, including boating and shooting if you feel like working off your frustrations after a few heavy business sessions.

There are also plenty of options elsewhere in Europe, of course.

There's the atmospheric Hotel Adlon Kempinski, right by the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin ([www.hotel-adlon.de](http://www.hotel-adlon.de)), for example, a firm favorite with world leaders and business barons looking for somewhere discreet and private to do their planning and plotting.

For complete privacy you could choose one of the two presidential suites on the third and fifth floors, where all the usual super-luxurious and high-tech features that come as standard are complemented by a number that don't. After all, how many hotels can you think of where high-security measures include 24-hour video surveillance of the corridors, steel-reinforced walls and eight-centimeter-thick bullet-resistant windows? That really would make you feel safe.

Some may think Monaco is a little too well-known on the world stage to be the venue for a discreet meeting, but how about the state-of-the-art Monte Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort ([www.montecarloresort.com](http://www.montecarloresort.com)), which has its own dedicated business center on the first floor, where there's a choice of 10 meeting rooms for between 18 and 80 people?

A big bonus is that many provide you with a spectacular sea view, sure to help with a bit of clear thinking, and each comes complete with its own dedicated kitchen and bathrooms, so no one need ever know you are there; unless, of course, you choose to tell them.

And don't let the fact that Monaco has no airport of its own cause you any concern. Your team of highfliers can simply take a plane to Nice airport and then a helicopter transfer takes just seven minutes—a rather stylish way to go to work.

If Spain is convenient, you could look to Barcelona and the Ritz Carlton's Hotel Arts ([www.hotelartsbarcelona.com](http://www.hotelartsbarcelona.com)), a 44-story, glass-and-steel hotel, one of the tallest buildings in the country. Right down by the Mediterranean, security here is excellent, as are the business facilities, and again there's the added advantage of a spa, in this case the Six Senses spa on the 42nd and 43rd floors, with some of the most dramatic views of both the city and the coastline. And there are plenty of nearby attractions for when you finish your deliberations.

For somewhere really off the beaten track, however, the Hotel Kempinski Palace Portorož in Slovenia ([www.kempinski-portoroz.com](http://www.kempinski-portoroz.com)) is worth considering. The palace-style hotel, a popular rest-and recuperation

center for Austro-Hungarian officers during the first half of the 19th century, recently reopened after lying idle for 20 years.

Having been renovated and extended with a modern wing, the grand old building now has 185 rooms and suites, not to mention an excellent restaurant, historic ballroom, restored using the original plans and pictures, conference rooms and even a presidential suite. The hotel is five minutes from an airport that takes private jets, and 40 minutes by road from Trieste.

But if you really want to get away from it all and the budget will stretch to an exotic destination, you could always head for The Oriental hotel in Bangkok ([www.mandarinoriental.com](http://www.mandarinoriental.com)), still one of the best hotels to be found anywhere.

For total privacy opt for the Authors' Wing, a collection of suites in the original hotel building and you will have what is virtually an entire colonial-style hotel to yourself. Mind you, there are also plenty of fully equipped meeting and conference rooms, not to mention a state-of-the-art business center, should you need them.

And when work is done for the day take one of the hotel's private boats across the river for dinner at the terrace restaurant overlooking the water. Board meetings don't get much better than this.

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