

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Ljubljana, 19 January 2026

CONVENTA WILL UNVEIL THE FIRST SELECTION OF LEADING SPECIAL VENUES IN NEW EUROPE

The winners will be announced on 11 February 2026 at Conventa in Ljubljana

The Meetings Star, an independent, transparent evaluation of meeting destinations and hotels, has set quality standards in New Europe's events industry for over 16 years. At the initiative of participating destinations, the organisers have developed a new methodology for evaluating special venues in 2025. In the past year, hidden guests analysed 38 unique event venues, divided into two categories. Twenty-four venues were assessed in the built historical venue category (repurposed to host events), while fourteen were evaluated in the outdoor and natural special venue category. The revised methodology enables assessors to make comparable and qualitative assessments, reflecting current trends in the events industry. In the ever-evolving events landscape, such event venues and properties are playing an increasingly important role. The results of the competition will be announced at the gala award ceremony on 11 February 2026, as part of the Conventa trade show.

The selection of the best special venues is based on the established Meetings Star Awards system, which has served as a reference platform for comparing the quality of hotels and convention centres across New Europe over the past decade. Expanding the evaluation's scope by including special venues is a logical step in the methodology's evolution that keeps pace with trends in the events industry and recognises the growing importance of venues that cater to the design and needs of modern events.

For 2025/2026, the Meetings Star accolades will be awarded in two main categories for special event venues.

The first category is dedicated to purpose-built historical and repurposed venues, comprising museums, galleries, castles, historical residences, industrial heritage buildings, former religious buildings, historical houses, theatres and educational facilities that now host events.

List of purpose-built historical and repurposed venues

- ARENA PULA, Pula
- ARSENAL ZADAR, Zadar
- BARONE FORTRESS, Šibenik
- BLED CASTLE, Bled
- CASTLE TAGGENBRUN, St. Veit
- CASTLE TRAKOŠČAN, Trakoščan
- CENTER NOORDUNG, Vitanje
- CROATIAN STATE ARCHIVE, Zagreb
- DANUBIANA, Bratislava
- DOX PRAGUE, Prague
- FOTOGRAFISKA TALLINN, Tallinn
- HANGAR 7, Salzburg
- KASARNA KARLIN, Prague
- KULTURHAUS BROTFAKRIK, Vienna
- KUNSTHAUS GRAZ, Graz
- LAUBA, Zagreb
- LJUBLJANA CASTLE, Ljubljana
- METASTADT, Vienna
- MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, Zagreb
- OTOČEC CASTLE, Otočec
- SEAPLANE HARBOUR, Tallinn
- SZECHENYI THERMAL BATH, Budapest
- THE WHITE PALACE, Belgrade
- WINE CELLAR ŠIPČANI, Podgorica

“Special venues have become one of the key differentiating factors of destinations that wish to become or remain competitive. Our new methodology will help us evaluate them equally and systematically based on the hidden guest experience and transparent quality standards. Our goal is to showcase that excellence in the events industry today is created where space, content and experiences merge into a convincing whole,” summarised Gorazd Čad, the initiator of the Meetings Star evaluation and co-founder of Conventa.

The evaluation of special venues is based on 15 handpicked criteria that ensure holistic, comparable and balanced assessments of the quality of event venues.

The second category comprises outdoor and natural event venues. Their main competitive advantage comes from the natural features, not built infrastructure. Such venues include (botanical) gardens, parks and natural areas, natural landmarks, such as waterfalls, caves, gorges and areas protected by law, vineyards and wine cellars, lakeside and riverside areas, coastal regions and mountain and Alpine venues.

List of outdoor and natural venues

- BOCHNIA SALT MINE, Poland
- BRIONI ISLANDS, Croatia
- CASTLE VINEYARD LJUBLJANA, Slovenia
- CAVE ROMANE, Croatia
- CUBO GOLF COURSE, Slovenia
- DOPPLER ESTATE, Slovenia
- FERTORAKOS CAVE THEATRE, Hungary
- KITZSTEINHORN GLACIER, Austria
- LIPICA STUD FARM, Slovenia
- LJUBLJANA BOTANICAL GARDEN, Slovenia
- PARK ORSULA, Croatia
- POSTOJNA CAVE, Slovenia
- THALLASO SPA LEPA VIDA, Slovenia
- WIELICZKA SALT MINE, Poland

Special venues are assessed by **hidden guests** who visit them anonymously and evaluate all aspects of the offering based on their on-site experience. This approach ensures objectivity of the assessment and offers a realistic insight into the quality of services and user experience in line with the standards of the events industry. The first-ever selection of exceptional venues in New Europe is setting a new framework for evaluating properties and venues that play an integral role in the success of modern events with their stories, ambience and experiences. Most importantly, special venues help raise a destination's international recognition.

Press material:

- [Meetings Star website](#)
- [Photo gallery of the winning destinations](#)
- [Photo gallery of the winning hotels](#)
- [Destination finder](#)
- [Venue finder](#)

www.conventa.si