

Simon Dufaur

Having gained three university degrees in three different countries in a four-year period, Simon Dufaur worked for an international consultancy and then for at the European Commission in Brussels. After several years in the EC, Simon left to rejoin the private sector as General Manager of a Brussels-based conference and exhibition organiser (PCO and PEO). During his tenure, Simon focussed on developing long-term client relationships with a number of key clients and directed the operational team in organising congresses and exhibitions on every continent. Enticed by new opportunities, Simon is now the Director of Operations at GCO, a leading Dutch meeting management company, where he is responsible for the implementation, management, supervision and evaluation of all of the company's services to its international association and public sector clients. Simon is a Past-President of MPI Belgium and lives close to Brussels.

A quick bite

My office is located in the Netherlands and I am fortunate enough to be able to work partly from home and not to have to travel there each day. So, a quick bite for me often means nipping into the kitchen, diving in to the fridge and grabbing the first thing that comes to hand!

Tete-a-Tete

Well, naturally, I have to pick something close to home and it would be the Arenberg restaurant for consistent quality, calm and value-for-money. www.restaurantarenberg.be/

Business and pleasure!

This one is quite a challenge as I have been lucky to have travelled extensively and therefore have dined in many restaurants around the world. Whenever I come across a good one I try to make a note of it and go back to it when I am in the area. So, here are some in Europe: Spondi, Athens (www.spondi.gr), La Terraza del Casino, Madrid (www.casinodemadrid.es/sp/gastronomia/rest_terraza/index.htm), Gidleigh Park, South West of England (www.gidleigh.com/). And for those of you travelling further afield, I would recommend The French Laundry when in Napa (www.frenchlaundry.com/), Quay in Sydney (www.quay.com.au), the China Club in Hong Kong (www.chinaclub.com.sg/aboutus_worldwide.html) and finally, La Colombe in Constantia, Cape Town (www.constantia-uitsig.com)

Groups

Most of our meetings tend to be city-based and, whenever possible, we try to hold one of the group dinners outside of the city. Two venues spring to mind, simply because the evenings were so memorable with fantastic sunsets, a gorgeous setting and great food: Zorgvliet, South Africa (www.zorgvliet.co.za) and Santa Rita, Chile (www.santarita.cl/OpenDocs/asp/defaultTour.asp?boton=Tour&argInstanciaId=27&argCarpetalId=6&esTour=1&argTit=RES)

Abroad

I have been able to get packing down to a fine art with just the right amount of clothes and toiletries for the trip. However, in spite of all my diligence, I see the volume double when it comes to packing all the cables you need. The laptop has one, the phone another, the iPod yet another one, the camera its own special one, and the list goes on. Surely, all these clever engineers could speak to one another and agree on a common cable format?!

Hotel

The Hudson hotel (NY), The Mount Nelson (Cape Town), Hotel Arts (Barcelona) The Shangri-La (Sydney), but the absolute topper was that private island we rented in Bora Bora with those wonderful picture-postcard views of the main island – magical!

City

For somewhere nearby it would be Brugge or Antwerp and for a little further afield it would be San Francisco, Chicago, Santiago de Chile, Rio de Janeiro, London, Vienna, Cape Town, Hong Kong or Melbourne. Each has something different to offer and all are great cities to visit.

Country

There is very little that I don't like about New Zealand, so that has to be my first choice, primarily for its glorious scenery, value-for-money and a sense of safety. Other favourites include Thailand for its hospitality and food, Italy for its culture (and food!), and Vietnam for simply having Halong Bay.

Airline

I'm a personal fan of Qantas as I find their scheduling to be very convenient and their on-board service to be efficient and laced with humour; particularly important when travelling long-haul! I would definitely recommend their First Class product, whereas for Business it would be Singapore Airlines. Within Europe, I like Brussels Airlines and find that its offering has been significantly bolstered by now being part of Star Alliance (and likewise for the Miles and More membership programme). None of these can quite compare, sadly, with the old Ansett airlines. I fondly remember taking a winter flight with them once where all the seats had sheepskin covers and the on-board chef was cooking to order. Delightful!

MICE Secret

Now that would be telling...! What I will tell you is that the secret to stopping hiccups lies in warm water!

MICE Personality

I would like to highlight someone not well known in Europe but a friend of mine based in Cape Town. Zelda Ingram has been involved in the meetings industry for quite a few years and has overseen its ongoing development in her country since the transition from apartheid. Whenever possible with her clients' meetings, she has sought to engage in initiatives that support the local community. It may be in the form of a skills transfer, where local unemployed people learn a new skill through working on a meeting; it may be in 'feedback', where excess food from a meeting is donated to the needy; or it may be in the form of sourcing meeting material (bags, give-aways, etc.) locally from a community project. All of these contribute to the legacy that a meeting can leave behind and have a direct impact on the quality of peoples' lives. Furthermore, she played a key role in the movement to form a local MPI Chapter there. She is both an inspiration and a good friend.

5 Likes

Nature, individuality, wit (eg the cartoons of Simon Drew: www.simondrew.co.uk/designs/designs.htm), good wine and live events (both music and sports).

5 Dislikes

Banality, negativism, traffic jams, office politics and, of course, excessive taxation.

Top 10 People I would like to Meet or have Dinner with...

Plato, Da Vinci, Puccini, Churchill, Nelson Mandela, David Attenborough, Jean-Paul Sartre, Stephen Covey, Umberto Eco, and Stephen Fry.