

place where the ship's officers dined and strategized during World War II, the Korean War, and Desert Storm.

STAY - Halekulani

Last year, this iconic 453-room Hawaiian hotel celebrated its 30th anniversary and today, it continues to enchant guests with its luxurious rooms and suites, many with stunning views of nearby Diamond Head. There are a total of six suite categories from which to choose, and standard guest rooms range from 500 to 720 square feet in size.

EAT - The Pig & The Lady

For an inventive and flavorful take on comforting Vietnamese and Asian dishes, head straight to this beautifully designed restaurant in the heart of Honolulu's Chinatown. Specialties include pho and roasted pig. The entire restaurant can also be booked for events.

to Oahu," she explains. "The next island with the largest capacity for larger groups is Hawaii Island."

She says that Hawaii Island, in particular, has seen a lot of interest from travel- and meeting-industry-related groups, including the Financial & Insurance Conference Planners, which held its annual conference at the Hilton Waikoloa Village in November 2014. The National Association of Career Travel Agents plans to meet this November at the Sheraton Kona Resort & Spa at Keauhou Bay for its annual conference. "We're seeing some industry conferences that want to host their conference there; it's been a great destination for that," says Hughes.

The Sheraton Kona is one hotel property that Deanna Isbister, sales director for the Big Island Visitors Bureau (BIVB), knows well. Having taken several meeting planning programs to the property, as well as been part of internal BIVB meetings that took place at the Sheraton, she says that what she finds most special about it is its rich history and "special sense of place."

Cultural activities at the Sheraton Kona include a traditional Hawaiian *imu* (pit) dinner, lei making, hula lessons, guided tours of the historic Keauhou Bay, and even branding your own Hawaiian canoe paddle with Polynesian symbols.

While there are a number of beach and island destinations around the world that are suited for meeting and incentive groups, it's that one-of-a-kind cultural experience that sets Hawaii apart, says Hughes and Isbister. "It helps benchmark Hawaii as an international experience--but without the price tags or difficulties of traveling internationally," explains Hughes.

Here's a closer look at the latest news and updates from Oahu and Hawaii Island.

Often regarded as the "heart of Hawaii" and the "meeting place" of the islands, Oahu continues to add to its already robust meeting and tourism infrastructure. The biggest news from the island relates to the 2016 opening of the island's very first Four Seasons, the Four Seasons Resort Oahu at Ko Olina, which replaces the former JW Marriott Ihiliani Resort.

ESSENTIAL TOOL BOX

CONVENTION CENTERS & FACILITIES

Oahu: Hawaii Convention Center (1.1

Hilton is also busy adding to its Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort. Last summer, Hilton broke ground on a new 418-unit vacation ownership tower, The Grand Islander by Hilton Grand Vacations Club,