

In search of exclusivity

Heritage sites are in abundance across Macau but approval for private use is tough to secure, frustrating event planners, discovers **Prudence Lui**

Despite Macau's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Centre and its plethora of historical sites, business event planners are hitting a brick wall when it comes to securing a meaningful unique venue for their clients.

According to Macau's Cultural Affairs Bureau, no applications from private companies for the use of heritage sites under its management have been accepted for the last six to seven years. The reason? These venues were abused during past events.

Only applications by non-profit organisations for charity activities will be considered.

The bureau's stand on this matter has drawn criticism from local event specialist Bruno Simoes, CEO of smallWORLD Entertainment.

"No government owned space is available for private events. It is unfortunate."

Sharing the same observation is MCI Group Macau's managing director, Peter Hassall.

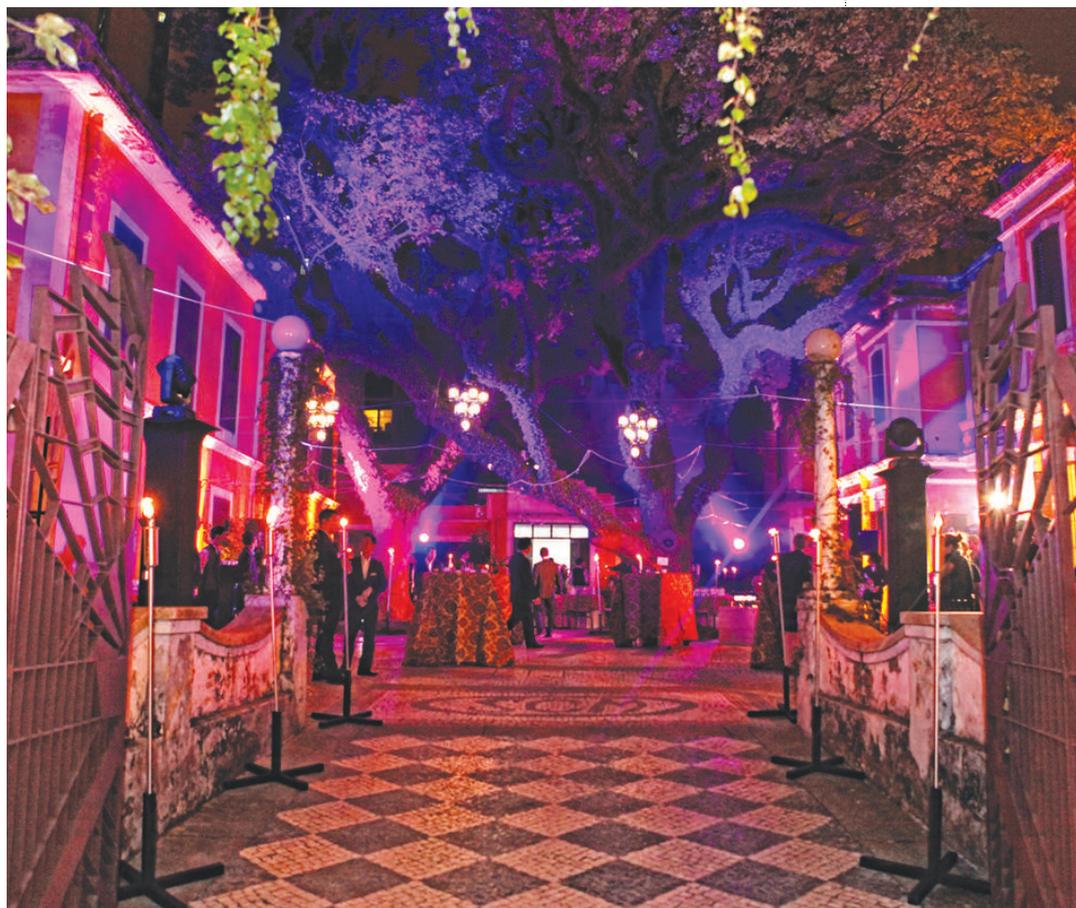
Hassall recalled: "Mount Fortress (built from 1617 to 1626 as the city's main military defence structure) used to be available for event hire but we were told that was stopped due to past abuse of the property."

In order to continue to provide unique settings for client events, MCI Group Macau has turned to privately owned venues.

In mid-2013 it organised a VIP event for global hospitality giant, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, at Albergue 1601. The restaurant sits in the heritage St. Lazarus Quarter on the Macau Peninsula, serving up contemporary Mediterranean cuisine in a traditional Portuguese setting. It can accommodate a sit-down dinner banquet for 240 guests.

"We had to get permission from the owners, which normally takes around three weeks, (and approval depends) on whether there are other events (being booked at the same time) at the venue," said Hassall.

For the event, MCI Group Macau paid a fee to hire Albergue 1601 for



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Business development director
MacPro Gallery

privacy, engaged entertainment from The Venetian Macao and had Sheraton Macao Hotel cater F&B.

Hassall said: "People think that Macau is all Chinese, but this event presented them with a unique insight into the destination's Portuguese history. The entertainment was specially chosen to showcase

Macau's heritage (through storytelling)."

Offering event planners yet another privately owned venue option is the new Macpro Gallery in the downtown Central district of Macau Peninsula.

The venue occupies the second floor of a commercial complex and had undergone a year-long renovation to become the multipurpose space it is today. A picture-hanging system, various lighting modes, professional audio equipment recording system, projector and Wi-Fi access are all provided, allowing Macpro Gallery to meet the needs of a variety of events.

Macpro Gallery is joined by Macpro Business Centre on the 27th floor of the same building, a venue that offers 13 serviced offices and two meeting rooms that can accom-

Unable to access heritage sites, MCI Group Macau took a client event to the beautiful Albergue 1601 restaurant in heritage St. Lazarus Quarter

modate three and 50 pax respectively.

Business development director of Macpro Gallery, Anita Ao, said: “The supply of off-site venues in Macau is limited. Organisers have to constantly look for fresh and new venues to thrill their attendees.”

Ao said Macpro Gallery’s unique selling points are its “fresh look and chic feel” and relative affordability compared to function rooms at hotels in the destination.

“It is also away from the gaming environment,” she added.

Business events held at Macpro Gallery can incorporate walking tours of the surrounding historical sites, Ao suggested.

Event planners who do take gatherings to such standalone private venues are supported by a variety of catering services. MGM Macau, for instance, has a specialised catering and events team, comprising of eight personnel who manage all in-

house and off-site events. The team is experienced and has handled several government functions.

Vice president of sales, public & community relations, Irene Wong, told *TTGmice*: “(Clients can choose) either plated dinners or cocktails with pass-around canapés – it all depends on the venue. The key challenge in using off-site venues is limitation on power and water supply, food preparation areas or even sheltered spaces.”



Need to know

A real taste of Portugal

Hotel Royal Macau’s latest dining destination brings traditional Portuguese flavours, crafted by two internationally recognised Portuguese chefs, Luis Américo and Marco Gomes, to the shores of Macau.

The 120-seat FADO restaurant features four private rooms and offers a menu of well-loved dishes made with a contemporary touch and using ingredients, such as squid and olive oil, that are imported directly from Portugal. A live cooking demonstration is offered when the *Bolinhos de Bacalhau* dish is ordered.

Diners can also enjoy a good selection of Portuguese wines.

FADO is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Hotel Riviera and Hotel Beverly Plaza Macau introduce new accommodation experiences

Macau CTS Hotel Management (International) is renovating two of its member hotels in Macau.

The 132-key Riviera Hotel has just completed phase one of works which gave some of its guestrooms a new resort theme. Other room themes will be introduced through the next stage of refurbishments.

The other property to benefit from refurbishments is Hotel Beverly Plaza Macau. Four suites have been upgraded and each boast a unique theme. Phase two of work, due to complete in 2015, will give four other suites decor themed after the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn and winter.



City of Dreams kicks lifestyle entertainment up a notch

The new SOHO at City of Dreams integrated resort is a complex offering 16 restaurants and bars, state-of-the-art entertainment and engaging street art, making it a new destination for visitors to hang out and have a good time.

The extensive array of dining outlets include familiar chain restaurants such as Din Tai Fung and Hard Rock Café, as well as popular eateries imported from Hong Kong like Chan Kee Roasted Goose.

For entertainment, visitors can expect street performers executing stunning acts, including a one-of-a-kind flash mob featuring international award-winning dancers, graffiti artists who will speed-spray paintings, comedians, magicians and musicians.

Refreshed coastal attraction

Macau Fisherman’s Wharf is now under redevelopment and will present refreshed facilities, new dining establishments and three new hotels – Harbourview Hotel, Legend Palace Hotel and Legendale Hotel – when it completes in 3Q2016.

The first hotel of the trio to open will be the four-star 445-key Harbourview Hotel, a property modelled after 18th century architecture in Prague. It is expected to welcome its first guests in 3Q2014.

The completed attraction will also increase in size, from 23,500m² to approximately 133,000m².

It is located at Freguesia da Sé in Macau Peninsula.

