

ITPG

25-28 February 2016: GGI ITPG winter meeting

High level tax meeting in Barcelona

By Oliver Biernat and Carlos Frühbeck

All tax experts at GGI member firms are cordially invited by the GGI International Taxation Practice Group to its famed winter meeting. Back in spring 2015, senior members at ITPG voted in a poll to decide the venue for 2016: Barcelona was the winner and Carlos Frühbeck from Ficesa Treuhand, S.A.P will be your host.

Barcelona is one of Europe's most popular tourist destinations, offering an outstanding mix of culture, gastronomy and shopping. No matter which district or neighbourhood of Barcelona you may find yourself in, there is always something of interest to see and experience. For example, a vast array of architectural jewels: Gaudi features prominently and the modernist movement is stamped across the city. Food markets and relics dating back to Roman and medieval times are also popular with tourists. Barcelona is located on the Mediterranean coast and enjoys a mild winter climate. The average temperature in February is between a low of 6 °C and a high of 14 °C. Barcelona has an international airport with direct connections to most European capitals in addition to many destinations in North America and the Middle East.

Delegates and their guests can also enjoy the gastronomical and cultural delights Barcelona has to offer should they wish to extend their stay. For example, there are several walking tours dedicated to subjects including Roman and medieval history, the artistic movement of Modernism as well as specific Gaudi or Picasso routes. There are also places of



Park Güell in Barcelona

interest in the vicinity of Barcelona, such as the Benedictine Abbey located atop the mountain of Montserrat, the historic city of Girona and the Dalí Theatre and Museum in Figueres.

The Gallery Hotel has been chosen



Seafood Paella in seaside cafe

to host the conference. It is a boutique hotel located in the heart of Barcelona, a three minute walk away from La Pedrera and the most exclusive shops of Passeig de Gràcia. The hotel offers comfortable and recently renovated meeting rooms perfectly suited to our conference needs. The hotel is located only 20 minutes from the airport by taxi.

On Thursday evening all delegates and their guests are invited to a welcome reception in the lobby of the hotel, followed by a walk to "Miguelitos" restaurant where we will enjoy traditional Spanish tapas and good wine.

The technical agenda starts on Friday morning at 9 a.m. with an overview of current ITPG projects in the various regions and a discussion on potential future projects. As requested by the majority of senior members, the rest of the morning session will again be spent discussing an international tax case, this

time presented and moderated by Ashish Bairagra from India. Ashish will run a problem solving session focusing on a mix of transfer pricing and cross-border income and inheritance tax issues. Several groups will work on various problems and be tasked with finding different solutions. When the groups present their work, the aim is ultimately for all participants to have learned something new about tax issues in many different countries.

After the lunch break, further tax related PG meetings such as “Immigration & Expatriate Services”, chaired by Huub Kapel and “Indirect Taxes”, chaired by Steve McCrindle and Toon Hasselman, should be of interest to delegates. The PG meetings will take place consecutively in the conference room with each scheduled to last one hour.

In the evening, delegates will have a little time to relax before a 25 minute stroll to “Els Quatre Gats” (The Four Cats), a restaurant which was at the heart of the modernist movement of Barcelona and a favourite haunt of Picasso. The restaurant serves traditional Mediterranean fare with live music in the background. After dinner, delegates are free to walk back to the hotel or enjoy the nightlife in one of the many bars in Barri Gòtic (the Gothic Quarter). A taxi back to the hotel will cost around EUR 10.

On Saturday morning, various speakers will deal with recent national tax issues which involve cross-border effects in the framework of a general discussion on international tax topics. And of course, Oliver will show funny YouTube films as per usual for a little light relief

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Barcelona – La Sagrada Familia Cathedral

between presentations.

Later in the morning we will focus on marketing aspects for tax experts. Marketing professional Paul Atkinson from Lawrence Grant, Chartered Accountants, has been invited to talk about online marketing. His talk will cover several areas including: increasing website traffic, SEO vs SEA, company logos and social media. Paul is also happy to offer one-to-one sessions after the presentation if you would like to receive general feedback on your website or help setting up a social media page. If this is of interest, you may of course bring along your own marketing experts to learn some tips and tricks

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first hand or exchange ideas with other experts.

After lunch, a two hour guided sight-seeing walking tour of Barcelona is available to all delegates. We would recommend bringing appropriate, comfortable footwear for the tour. After enjoying a little free time, we will meet for dinner at the restaurant “El Tragaluz”, where the conference will be brought to a close in good company and with delicious food and drink. For those wishing to make a night of it, Carlos can recommend a few places to extend the evening’s festivities after dinner.

On Sunday, there is the option of going on an excursion by bus to the Bodega Alella winery, which will include food and wine tasting for those delegates who wish to make the most of the final day in Spain and catch an evening flight home. The winery is located just 20 km from Barcelona.

The last few ITPG winter meetings have combined high quality tax work with opportunities for fun, and there is no reason to think that Barcelona won’t live up to previous years’ standards, with its Mediterranean climate, not to mention excellent flight connections and convenient journey time from the airport.