

HMM/VMM-265 Squadron's Association: Options for 2023

ARIZONA

Tucson: Multiple hotel options include: Ramada by Wyndham Tucson (\$100/night), La Quinta Inn & Suites by Wyndham Tucson Reid Park (\$109/night), DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Tucson Williams Center (\$119/night), Sheraton Tucson (\$119/night), Embassy Suites by Hilton Tucson East \$129/night), Sonesta Select Tucson Airport (\$129/night); Casino Del Sol Tucson (\$109/night), Desert Diamond Casino & Hotel (\$119/room + loads of extras); each offer with their separate lists of amenities. Tucson is completing a massive improvement project (Rio Nuevo District project) that has been in the works for 20 years to revitalize its downtown urban core and compete on the tourism stage with the likes of Austin TX, San Diego CA, Colorado Springs CO and other successful mid-sized magnets.

CALIFORNIA

San Diego: No representatives from San Diego attended the last 4 trade shows I participated in during 2021, so there are no pending offers from venues in this city. I went to Cvent, our (MPE, Inc.) proprietary web site to investigate their hotel situation. Currently, there are 673 hotels and convention centers in San Diego and the surrounding area. I added several filters to better address the needs of HMM-265, including: those only within the city limits; 20 miles or less from airport; 0 to 500 rooms; only 3-5 Star properties (1-2 Star properties likely will not have the kind of suite HMM-265 needs); all chains, brands, venues, and affiliates; and the dates 11/08/23 – 11/12/23. With these filters applied there are 145 venues. I also looked at the mean monthly room rates for these hotels in San Diego and let the software calculate its 6-month projected rate. These are: July, 2021 = \$256; December, 2021 = \$193; May, 2022 = \$260. Unfortunately, San Diego is now much like San Francisco. That is, they do minimal group bookings because their transient (daily walk-ins) rate is so high and constant. Why would any hotels want to book any group rooms at a \$159 nightly room rate when their walk-ins will pay \$260? I do not believe HMM-265 will be able to find a hotel in downtown San Diego for less than \$250/night in 2023.

Los Angeles: A few members mentioned LA as a possible venue for 2023. Too big. Too many choices. I need guidance of what specific area in LA: for example, Santa Monica, Inglewood, Monterey Park, etc.

COLORADO

Colorado Springs: convenient access and unique charm, Colorado Springs is a great destination for military reunions. Spectacular scenery is found throughout the region and Pikes Peak - America's Mountain serves as a majestic backdrop. Founded by civil war hero General William Jackson Palmer in 1871, the city has a rich military tradition and is home to the U.S. Air Force Academy, Fort Carson, Schriever Air Force Base, Peterson Air Force Base and the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

ILLINOIS

Springfield: Melissa Dunbar of Visit Springfield and The Military Reunion Network, has submitted an interesting and competitive proposal for your 2023 meeting with room prices ranging from \$109-119/night + other amenities from 4 different hotels that submitted bids for your business. In addition, the CVB will return cash rebates ranging from \$1-2/room/night back to the Group. Springfield is home of the Abraham Lincoln Museum and Presidential Library.

LOUISIANA

New Orleans: There was minor discussion/mention of holding all future meetings in NOLA every other November but no groundswell for this idea. The Astor expressed KEEN interest in

hosting and I know other hotels would like to get into the bidding process if the decision was made to always meet in NOLA.

KENTUCKY

Louisville: Bourbon, horses and history: Market Street, a performing arts center, the Urban Bourbon Trail (40 stops), Churchill Downs, paddleboats on the Ohio River, Louisville Slugger Museum and bat factory and other attractions. Samantha Laloggia, Area Sales Manager, 104 North 4th St., Louisville KY, 502-588-4089 office; 502-612-7236 cell; Crowne Plaza Louisville Airport, \$159/night + many amenities; Mary McCloud, Director of Sales, Courtyard by Marriott @ \$131/night + several amenities, 819 Phillips Lane, Louisville; 502-368-5678 ext. 7159; Mary.McCloud@aimhosp.com

MONTANA

Billings Stefan Cattarin, Meeting & Convention Sales Manager, Visit Billings Montana's Trailhead, m: (360) 223-0750, d: (406) 869-3731, stefan@visitbillings.com has been persistent in pursuing HMM-265 to hold its 2023 meeting there. They have promised financial assistance with a welcome reception for your members, help with scheduling tour itineraries and hotel packages ranging from \$96 to \$129/night room rates. Attractions include: Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Fort Custer at Big Horn County Museum, Lewis & Clark 'Pompey's Pillar National Monument, Yellowstone County Museum and reunion 'friendly' hotels experienced with military reunions (Host of 2019 Marine Corps League National Convention, Berlin US Military Reunion, US Army Veterans Reunion, USS McCoy, 5th Bomb Group, others).

TEXAS

Arlington, Forth Worth: Representatives of both cities have contacted me regarding hosting your 2023 meeting. I personally think Fort Worth is the better option for HMM-265. Flying into DFW is easy and transportation from there to the Fort is simplified by TEXRail commuter rail line for just \$2.50 each way. Mule Alley is a carefully curated collection of restaurants, venues and heritage sites in the historic Stockyards. Most signature hotels in the city have been recently renovated and 3 new hotels (Sinclair, AC, Kimpton Harper) recently have opened to offer an inventory of >15,000 guest rooms. This could be a very FUN destination for your group as the historic Western Stockyards still features the world's only twice-daily cattle drive.

12/07/2021