GALVESTON AND THE WOODLANDS

Galveston Island and The Woodlands are great alternatives to Houston, whether you are looking for pre- or post-convention vacation options or affordable meeting space near the big city.

The Gulf of Mexico town of Galveston has carefully preserved its buildings and neighborhoods, creating a relaxing beach getaway with historic panache.

“Galveston is an affordable beach destination that offers a beautiful tropical environment, world-class facilities, historic charm and plenty of tourist attractions,” says Meg Winchester, CMP, director of the Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau. “And as a result, it allows meeting attendees to truly mix business with pleasure.”

Once the second-busiest port for immigration in America, Galveston’s 36-block Historic Downtown Strand District includes more than 100 shops, restaurants, attractions and galleries. Visitors can take a ride in a horse-drawn carriage. One of America’s top amusement parks, Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark, overlooks the Gulf of Mexico.

The Woodlands Resort & Conference Center is a popular meeting venue for many oil and energy companies since it features two golf courses and is only 30 minutes from downtown Houston.

The beauty of The Woodlands Resort is that it can easily accommodate conferences, with 406 guest rooms and 60,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. Amid the Piney Woods eco-region, the resort also serves as a world-class destination, replete with a spa, expansive pool areas and access to 194 miles of hiking and biking trails. There are hundreds of upscale shops and galleries at The Woodlands Town Center.
Aster, in the midst of a $46.5 million renovation of its downtown building, listed contributors such as Chevron, ConocoPhillips and Schlumberger. Centennial Gardens at Hermann Park was completed last fall to celebrate the park’s 100th anniversary, at a cost of $31 million, with substantial contributions from the oil industry. Ditto for the redevelopment of Buffalo Bayou Park, scheduled to be unveiled this summer.

If something big is happening in Houston, it’s pretty safe bet the energy industry is involved.

Meeting Destination
As you might expect, Houston knows how to put on a pretty good energy industry meeting. The largest of the many industry meetings is the Offshore Technology Conference May 4-7. Last year this conference drew more than 100,000 attendees to NRG Park, delivering a tremendous economic benefit to the city. Other energy conferences include the annual NAPE Summit, one of the industry’s prime deal-making extravaganzas, which brought 17,000 attendees to the convention center in February. One of the newer events that takes place at the convention center is Total Energy USA.

Getting There
Houston boasts the fourth-largest airport system in the United States, with service to 190 cities worldwide thanks to two major airports. George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) ranks third among U.S. airports for scheduled nonstop domestic and international service and eighth for total passengers.

As a hub for international travel, especially to Mexico and Latin America, Houston is also a popular meeting destination thanks to its exceptional airlift. There are more than 700 daily departures from IAH and the new $440 million Terminal E and Federal Inspection Services can process more than 4,500 passengers per hour. William P. Hobby Airport (HOU) features one of Southwest Airlines’ biggest hubs. Houston Airport Marriott at George Bush Intercontinental, located inside the airport grounds, is undergoing a multimillion dollar renovation that will be complete in the fall. Upgrades are scheduled for all 573 guest rooms, 30,000 sq. ft. of meeting space and common areas.

Always Thinking Big
Houston’s skyline, already one of the most impressive in America, seems to be changing almost weekly. And the changes will become even more dramatic as the 2017 Super Bowl nears.

This city has always thought big. That’s why it’s one of America’s busiest seaports, even though it’s 50 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. That’s also why its population speaks nearly 100 different languages, it’s a world-class center for culture and the arts and Houston was picked to host the Super Bowl for a third time.

Energy, it turns out, is an industry with a pretty big heart. Just ask the people of Houston.

Steve Winston has traveled extensively and writes for national and international magazines.

RESOURCES

- Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau
galveston.com
- Houston First Corporation
visitHouston.com
- The Woodlands Convention & Visitors Bureau
thewoodlandscvb.com
MAJOR MEETING VENUES

Galveston

Ashton Villa
Ashton Villa was built in 1859 by a wealthy Galveston family; it was the first palace on Broadway and the first brick house in Texas; seats 300 for cocktails, 200 for dinner.

Hotel Galvez & Spa
This majestic AAA Four Diamond property across from the Gulf of Mexico is a local landmark; 224 guest rooms; more than 13,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; great seafood at Galvez Bar & Grill.

Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center
Amenities include a championship golf course and a spa; 418 guest rooms; convention center with 103,000 sq. ft.

Texas Seaport Museum
The tall ship Elissa, built in Scotland in 1877, is a key feature of the museum; the ship is a floating National Historic Landmark; space for 500 at the museum; 300 can be seated on the pier.

The San Luis Resort, Spa & Conference Center
On the Gulf of Mexico; full-service resort and meeting center; 700 guest rooms; 200,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, including 140,000-square-foot Galveston Island Convention Center; AAA Four Diamond; lighted tennis courts.

Houston

Brennan’s of Houston
Houston icon was rebuilt after a fire during Hurricane Ike in 2008; 10 meeting rooms that hold up to 160 for a seated dinner.

Courtyard Houston Downtown/Convention Center
Originally built in 1921 as Humble Oil Building; 191 guest rooms; 2,760 sq. ft. of meeting space; complimentary Wi-Fi in guest rooms, lobby and public areas; short walk to convention center.

Four Seasons Houston
In the heart of the downtown business district; convenient to cultural attractions; 404 guest rooms; 16,522 sq. ft. of meeting space; fourth-floor resort-style pool; spa.

George R. Brown Convention Center
The 1.8 million-square-foot convention center is one of the largest in the nation; distinctive nautical theme; recognized for its green practices.

Hilton Americas-Houston
1,200 guest rooms; 91,500 sq. ft. of event space; connected to the George R. Brown Convention Center; four dining options; Skyline Spa & Health Club.

Hilton Houston NASA Clear Lake
All 245 guest rooms have water view; NASA Space Center is nearby; 15,792 sq. ft. of meeting space; 247 business center; fully equipped fitness center.

Hyatt Regency Houston
947 guest rooms; 71,300 sq. ft. of meeting space; four dining options include Spindletop revolving rooftop restaurant; heated outdoor pool; 24/7 fitness center.

JW Marriott Houston Downtown
Artfully designed hotel; 326 guest rooms; 16,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; direct connection to the underground tunnel system from the lobby; light rail connection to George R. Brown Convention Center.

Lancaster Houston Hotel
Luxurious hotel first opened as the Auditorium Hotel in 1926; 93 guest rooms, 1,250 sq. ft. of space; located in the Theater District; extensive renovation in 2013; Bistro Lancaster.

NRG Park
With 350 acres and four meeting facilities: NRG Center has 706,000 sq. ft.; NRG Stadium can hold 71,500 and has 125,000 sq. ft. for meetings; NRG Arena has 5,600 seats and 25,000 sq. ft. of floor space; NRG Astrodome seats 65,000.

Royal Sonesta Houston
$25 million renovation to guest rooms and meeting spaces completed in 2013; 485 guest rooms; 50,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; fitness center; business center; ARA Restaurant.

Space Center Houston
120,000 sq. ft. of space in plaza; 9,961 sq. ft. in the Astronaut Gallery; 9,961 in the Starship Gallery; dining for 500 in the Zero-G Diner.

The Sam Houston Hotel
Opened in 1924; listed on the National Register of Historic Places; 100 guest rooms; more than 3,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; renovated in 2013.

The St. Regis Houston
232 guest rooms; 10,000 sq. ft. of space; near The Galleria shops and restaurants; Remington Restaurant is one of Houston’s best; River Oaks Spa.

The Westin Houston Downtown
Convenient to a variety of cultural, entertainment and sports attractions; 203 guest rooms; more than 5,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; fitness studio; business center; free downtown shuttle.

The Woodlands

Hyatt Place Houston/The Woodlands
All 146 guest rooms offer separate living and working areas; 6,144 sq. ft. of event space; free Wi-Fi; 24-hour gym; pet-friendly.

The Woodlands Resort & Conference Center
Located 30 minutes from downtown Houston; 406 guest rooms; more than 60,000 sq. ft. of space spread out among 33 meeting rooms; two golf courses; elegant restaurant; Forest Oasis Water-scape offers fun for the entire family.

The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center
Forbes Four Star-rated; connected via sky bridge to Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion; 343 guest rooms and suites; 75,000 sq. ft. of meeting space; commitment to sustainable practices.