



Hey Y'all – Come on Down for a Hot Time in Texas

This is your formal invitation to attend the 92nd Annual GRA Conference this year in Austin, Texas. In keeping with tradition, the festivities will begin with registration on Sunday afternoon July 30 and will sine die at noon on Wednesday August 2.

For those who have attended past conferences, no sales pitch is needed because you know from experience what a rewarding time is in store. For those who are considering attending for the first time or returning to the fold after a prolonged absence, consider for a moment just some of the great things conference participants will experience:

- Get firsthand information about how other states are dealing with the major policy issues of the day;
- Share tales of the latest political adventures/shenanigans from around the country;
- Find out what other organizations are up to: research projects, fundraising strategies, member relations, other organizational issues, etc.;
- Attend informative panel discussions on universal public policy concerns (As the attached schedule attests, the Trustees are putting together another quality program.);
- Hear about award-winning research;
- Make new, and renew old, acquaintances;
- Hang out with fun and interesting folks;
- See new sights; and
- Have a great time.

Who could ask for anything more? Well you'll get even more this year because you'll be in Austin, Texas, truly a beautiful and fun place to be. Yes, it will be hot, but since it's always hot in Texas in the summer, we know air conditioning and, besides, there are lots and lots of lovely shade trees.

The Monday night excursion to watch the Round Rock Express (AAA affiliate of the Houston Astros) will be a real treat. The Dell Diamond, their home park, has been named by Baseball America magazine as the best minor league ballpark in the country. We will have a covered party porch, complete with food and beverage, from which to watch the game, schmooze, nap, and/or carry on. Chewin' 'n' spittin' is optional.

Austin is the Live Music Capitol of the World with an international reputation for the number, quality and variety of musical acts performing every night. Dozens of venues are within a short walk or free trolley ride from the hotel. The downtown Sixth Street district

is our improved version of Bourbon Street and is packed with bars and restaurants of almost all descriptions.

Other possible points of interest within shouting distance of the hotel include the state capitol, state history museum (including an IMAX theater), and the University of Texas campus where a terrific new fine art museum has just opened. Austin also is home to the largest urban bat colony in the world and a major tourist attraction is watching the millions of Mexican freetail bats emerge each evening from under the Congress Avenue bridge to rid the area of pesky insects. Barton Springs Pool, a spring-fed natural swimming hole in an expansive downtown park, is one of the true garden spots in urban America.

Dining of all kinds is fabulous and you won't find any better Mexican food or "Q" (that's barbecue for those who don't know) anywhere, period. After all, Texas was once a part of Mexico and "Q" was perfected by Texas cowboys during the cattle drives of the mid-1800s.

This only scratches the surface of all the fun and interesting things to do in Austin. For all the details, check out the Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau website at www.austintexas.org. Whatever you're looking for, you'll find it here.

Pardner, how long's it been since you had a chance at a deal this good? Well, that's too long. Come on down, get smarter and enjoy some famous Texas hospitality