

Interesting Notes on the Venue for SIGAda 2002

Houston, Texas:

The Bayou City. Home to NASA's Johnson space center, in the forefront of medical technology and the busiest port in the United States. The Astrodome was the first covered stadium in the world. Culture has found its home in Houston with the Houston Symphony, Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Theater Under the Stars, The Museum District and many art collections. Two airports facilitate transportation, one on either side of the city. The freeway system is accessible from all parts of town and has contra-flow lanes for rush hour as well as park and ride facilities. Master-planned communities have formed all around Houston. Among the most popular is Clear Lake.

There are not a lot of cities where industrial giants and creative genius can both live in harmony and thrive, but Houston is one of them. Ranked the "third most livable city in the country" by Places Rated Almanac in 1996 and 1997, Houston is widely recognized as offering its 3.8 million residents a great range of cultural experiences and opportunities. More than just a "sprawling Texas town", the greater metropolitan area covers more ground than any other major city in America. No matter where you are in the city, excellent dining and entertainment are certain to be nearby. If you are interested in doing the city right, be sure and visit the sections outlined below. Although the entire city certainly has plenty to offer, these areas contain the greatest concentration of actual tourist attractions and points of interest.

Clear Lake

If you head south past the Loop on I-45, you will run into the Clear Lake/Kemah area. Unless you are the boat-loving outdoors type, the greatest attraction in this area is Johnson Space Center, Houston's famous home of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration). Tours through various NASA buildings—including the original Mission Control room—and other exhibits provide a full day of activities that are both fun and enlightening.

If you happen to prefer the "splashier" side of life, you will undoubtedly love this area. Both Clear Lake and Galveston Bay offer ample opportunities for its water sports and boating activities. In fact, this area has been labeled "the nation's third coast for boating" and contains one of the largest concentrations of pleasure boats in the country.

Galleria

The prestige and glamour of the Galleria area is undeniable. Office space in one of the nearby skyscrapers is expensive, and the shopping consists primarily of exclusive shops offering designer merchandise. Even the sports facilities in the area are world-class. Just ask the former NBA Champs and WNBA Champs. Compaq Center, home to both the Rockets and the Comets, stands proudly at the eastern edge of the area.

Bayou Place

Featuring restaurants, nightclubs, theaters, and concert houses all under one roof, this is a new addition to downtown entertainment. You can catch an art flick at the Angelika Film Center and grab a bite to eat at Angelika Café, or you can head over a couple of streets to Ruggles Bistro Latino and enjoy Latino music while dining on an assortment of Latin, South American and Caribbean specialties.

If all of this is not enough to impress you, try the underground tunnels and some shopping. A trip through this "city under the city" is an interesting experience that should not be missed by anyone —

tourist or resident. You are also welcome to relax in one of the downtown area's 53 parks or public spaces. And do not forget to take a peek at the brand-new stadium while you are in the area. The Astros started playing in this incredible stadium for the 2000 season.

Montrose

If you enjoy things "eclectic", the Montrose area is by far the most interesting section of the city. Considering that it blends right into the Museum District, it is no great surprise that numerous artist hangouts line the streets. If you happen to be in the right place at the right time, you can probably walk away with a quickly done caricature or other pieces of original art at a price that will amaze you.

Museum District

As you veer off from the heart of Montrose into the Museum District, the sights still have a distinctive artistic flavor, but the overall package is a little less funky. After all, both the Museum of Fine Art and the Contemporary Art Museum house some of the finest masterpieces in the world. A sense of class and distinction is inevitable. If your interest in museums leans toward the historical, do not miss the Houston Holocaust Museum. It is recognized worldwide as a leading source of information about the horrifying events of the Holocaust.

Medical Center

Six of the institutions that make up the Texas Medical Center were ranked in the 1998 U.S. News & World Report survey of the top hospitals in the country. If you have an interest in the medical field and the latest medical breakthroughs, definitely take the Medical Center Tour and visit the Museum of Health and Medical Science. It's a learning experience that you will not soon forget.

Hermann Park

Running alongside the Medical Center, in what can only be described as an odd blend of technology and nature, is Hermann Park. Or perhaps the blend is not as odd as it might seem. When striving to maintain a position as a leader in the healthcare industry, a peaceful view of a nearby park might be just what the doctor ordered for stress relief. Besides providing a peaceful view and getaway for the local medical workforce there, the park offers a variety of fun options to tourists and residents. Sports enthusiasts can commune with nature while exploring the bike and jogging trails or hit the golf course for the afternoon. Families enjoy spending the afternoon riding the train around the park and exploring the water on paddleboats. For a little cultural enhancement, Miller Outdoor Theatre offers exceptional evening performances during the warmest ten months of the Houston year. Grab your cooler and arrive early, because the grounds are usually packed with fans.

East Houston/San Jacinto

A visit to San Jacinto State Historical Park is a must for history buffs. The park encompasses the actual fields where General Santa Anna's troops were defeated by the troops of Sam Houston and other Texas patriots at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. If you have watched the movies or read the history books and "remember the Alamo," you will definitely appreciate the 570-foot monument that stands as a reminder of Texas' hard-won independence from Mexico. The history of Texas and its prominent leaders, both before and after this battle, has been fully captured in the Museum of Texas History, located in the base of the monument.