

## **AMS Conference on Hurricanes and Tropical Meteorology Site Visit San Juan, Puerto Rico: 07-08 July 2015**

We're looking at San Juan, Puerto Rico as the site for our 2016 spring meeting. Puerto Rico is an unincorporated U.S. territory and therefore not considered foreign travel for federal employees and is quite accessible from many U.S. and international locations. Puerto Rico's international airport, (San Juan Luis Munoz Marin) is located a few miles northeast of downtown San Juan and 6-7 miles east of the hotel sites that we are considering and is served by 8 U.S. airline carriers and several international carriers. A number of U.S. Cities offer direct flights to/from San Juan and include: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit (seasonal), Ft Lauderdale, Hartford, Houston-Hobby (seasonal), Jacksonville, Miami, New York-JFK, Newark, Orlando, Philadelphia, Tampa, Washington, DC, and West Palm Beach. International cities with direct flights to San Juan include: Bogota, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, London-Gatwick, Madrid, Oslo, and Toronto,

There are 2 hotel site options in San Juan, Puerto (site visits were conducted at each hotel and the AMS has vetted both locations to fitting their requirements) for the AMS tropical committee to consider. Both hotels, Condado Plaza Hilton and the Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel and Casino have been vetted by the AMS are located ~2.5 miles east of the Old San Juan district and 6-7 miles west of San Juan's International airport. Although both hotels are solid options for our group, we're recommending the Condado Plaza Hilton as the best overall choice for our 2016 meeting.

Further details on the 2 hotel choices are provided below:

### **1) Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel and Casino: April 10-15, 2016**

200 Convention Boulevard San Juan, Puerto Rico 00907

[http://www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=1523&language=en\\_US](http://www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=1523&language=en_US)

#### **Pros:**

- Nice hotel (updated); Hotel staff were very pleasant;
- Our group would take "almost" all of the hotel room capacity...this means no competing groups and more attentiveness from the hotel;
- Excellent meeting space (all rooms collocated);
- Break-out rooms close to conference rooms;
- ~\$20 cab ride (per carload from SJU);
- Avis rental car office on-site;
- Nice 4th floor rooftop area (pool) for Monday icebreaker and Wednesday dinner;
- Condado area: 10 min shuttle; Old San Juan: 15min shuttle;
- 3 hotel restaurants; Texas De Brasil in same complex; Hotel Spa (nice)
- The hotel agreed to sponsor our Monday night icebreaker (550-600 guests, 2 hr reception w/ chef's choice of appetizers (up to 8 pieces/person), and an hour of hotel's choice open bar;

- The hotel can set up grab & go stations at the Café and District Lounge that would include choices like wraps and salads (~\$9-10);
- Room rate >> ~\$159;
- Trip Advisor: 4/5 stars (15/45 local hotels); 4.2/5 Google;
- Meet Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico's convention bureau) has agreed to sponsor us at \$6/rm night (1535 rm nights total). This adds up to \$9210 that we could use for food, shuttles, & entertainment;

#### **Cons:**

- Isolated, fairly sparse area. There were big plans to develop this area with restaurants, businesses, etc., but the economy slow down in late 2000s looks to have really stopped things from really taking off;
- A quick lunch during the weekdays will be challenging (though the hotel has agreed to provide grab & go stations to help mitigate this problem);
- Casino in the hotel;
- Mexican restaurant out back is a real dive;
- Hotel parking: \$18/day self; \$25/day valet;
- Close to Condado restaurant area, but the foot bridge that leads over to this area (where the Condado Plaza Hilton is located) does not have a pedestrian path. Folks could cross that bridge by foot, but it can be a dicey walk because of the traffic (especially at night);
- Front desk seemed understaffed at times;
- Doesn't look like free Wi-Fi is in the cards- last we heard, the cost would be \$5,000/wk to provide our folks with "free" Wi-Fi;

## **2) Condado Plaza Hilton: April 17-22, 2016**

999 Ashford Avenue, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00907

<http://www.condadoplaza.com/default-en.html>

#### **Pros:**

- Nice hotel (updated); Hotel staff were very pleasant;
- Our group would take "almost" all of the hotel room capacity...this means no competing groups and more attentiveness from the hotel;
- Good meeting space (all rooms within 1-2 min walk);
- Right on the ocean; nice pool areas; beach front area;
- ~\$25 cab ride (per carload from SJU);
- Beautiful ocean front lawn for Monday icebreaker and Wednesday evening dinner
- Located right in the Condado area; Old San Juan: 10 min shuttle;
- Several hotel restaurants are available; There are also a wide variety of eateries and restaurants on the Condado strip (e.g. Starbucks, Subway, Cold Stone Creamery, and many local restaurants;
- They have agreed to sponsor our Monday night ice-breaker (they will match the reception that Sheraton has offered us);
- Room rate: \$159/nt (they lowered their nightly rate to match the Sheraton's rate);

- Trip Advisor: 3.5/5 stars (23/45 local hotels); 4.5/5 Google;
- The hotel is closing down their casino and converting it into a 10,000 sq. ft ballroom- this space looks like it would be ideal for our poster sessions and could possibly even serve as a session room. The hotel manager says: “given the size of our group, the entire hotel is completely committed to having that ballroom ready for our meeting in April”;
- Free Wi-Fi: in room, public spaces, and poster session room;
- Meet Puerto Rico (Puerto Rico’s convention bureau) has agreed to sponsor us at \$6/rm night (1535 rm nights total). This adds up to \$9210 that we could use for food, shuttles, & entertainment;

**Cons:**

- We need 4 rooms for our daily sessions. They could accommodate us in their 3 Ponce De Leon Rooms located in the Ocean Tower Mezzanine. The 4<sup>th</sup> session could be in the Miramar room located in the Lagoon Tower Mezzanine. This does require a walk across the over-street walkway, but is only a 1-2 minute walk from the Ponce De Leon rooms. It should be noted that the new ballroom, located next to the 3 Ponce De Leon rooms, could potentially serve as a 4<sup>th</sup> session room (i.e. it’s possible that we wouldn’t need to use the Miramar room);
- Construction timelines (e.g. casino to ballroom conversion) are often a wildcard (though the hotel manager does seem highly committed);
- Hotel parking: \$18/day self; \$25/day valet;