

Why Do We Go Where We Go...And Why Palm Springs?

We're happy to report that we've had one of the highest early-bird registrations in many years for our 2019 Annual Conference and Exposition in Palm Springs, plus we have one of the best speaker line-ups ever. All signs point to a superb event.

Even so, from time to time we have people ask our staff how and why we choose particular event venues. Here are some of the major factors we consider:

Cost: We try to find places willing to negotiate room rates that fit the budgets of rescue missions and other ministries that depend primarily on donations for revenue. It's not easy these days because it is (and has been) a "seller's market." Most faith-based associations our size settle for rates between \$159 and \$239 per night. (Two of our staff members went to the Christian Community Development Association event in 2018 and paid their special rate of \$174 per night.) We negotiate hard to keep the room rates under \$140 per night for you. In Palm Springs, we got rates of \$135 at the Renaissance and \$125 at the Hilton.

NOTE: Cost is also why we end up in places that a lot of people don't want to go during that time of year: It's hotter, but rooms are cheaper. The same rooms we're getting for \$135 and \$125 in June are selling for more than \$200 per night in January and February, even on discount travel sites.

Fit/Convenience: We have to hold these events in places where we can fit comfortably, and our attendees don't have to shuttle all over the city from various smaller hotels (an added cost). We've grown significantly over the past decade; we now simultaneously need 25,000 square feet of general session space and 25,000 square feet of exhibit space, plus 13–17 breakout rooms that fit up to 150 people. That's a tall order in a lot of cities.

Location: We try to move our major event around the country, attempting to hit all four time zones on a reoccurring basis. That makes it a bit more convenient for a revolving group of missions to save on airfare expenses. We haven't been to Southern California (where we have a significant cluster of missions and ministries) since 2011. It was time to go back. And with more than 88 percent of our attendees flying to the site, either coast doesn't seem to be a problem. In fact, one of our highest-ever attended events was way up in Seattle.

Experience: It's important to us that attendees get to see and enjoy unique places. While Palm Springs is known for its retirement resorts and palm tree-lined golf courses, it's also a business destination and a good place to hold a major conference. (Christian Management Association was there a couple of times; Christian Camp and Conference Association was just there in November.) Another reason we chose Palm Springs is because it's the closest affordable venue we could find to Los Angeles—allowing attendees to experience Skid Row and our member missions there. (That optional event, by the way, has so much interest we'll probably have to close it off at some point, so sign up soon if you're interested.)

Need: Some of the places we go need us to be there—as much as we need to see what’s going on. It’s no secret that Palm Springs—actually, much of the Coachella Valley—has a significant gay community. At Citygate Network, we don’t necessarily avoid cities where the lifestyle doesn’t line up with our convictions. We’ve held successful events in New Orleans and Las Vegas—plus we have missions there! What’s more, Jesus had the reputation of convening class with his disciples in places that the Pharisees denounced, like Samaria and Caesarea Philippi. Being in the world but not of the world, we can handle this.

Hopefully you’ll be among the huge crowd we’re expecting in Palm Springs and help us be salt and light in that important community.

We look forward to seeing you in the desert. And don’t be too concerned about the weather. The hotels and convention center have ample air conditioning.