

Peter Offer

The New Orleans Convention in 2007

In August 2005 plans were well ahead for the Rotary International Convention to be held in New Orleans in 2007. Then on August 29th disaster hit New Orleans with one of the most deadly storms the US had ever seen, with Hurricane Katrina creating devastation with 80% of the city flooded, 1800 lost their lives and tens of thousands were left homeless.

In fact the Rotary International Convention committee were holding their meeting in New Orleans a matter of hours before Katrina hit and managed to get one of the last flights out.

Overnight New Orleans lost its tourist industry and also lost the Rotary Convention which had to be moved to Salt Lake City. This year for the first time since that terrible day New Orleans is back and even better. It is back in the US Best 10 cities for tourism and is also holding the Rotary Convention May 21-25 next year.

In April this year I had the opportunity as a member of the RI Convention Promotion Committee to visit New Orleans to see the rebuild that has taken place. The French Quarter and hotels are even better than before Katrina, with more hotels having been built and the old ones completely refurbished.

Let me give you 10 good reasons why you should attend.

TEN. . Because your attendance will make a difference to New Orleans and its people.

New Orleans is different to all other US cities, with its mix of the South, with the French and Spanish influence you just cannot fail to fall for the charm of the area.

NINE. The French Quarter.

New Orleans is like two cities in one, in the day you can visit the French Quarter see its historic buildings many with the wrought iron balconies, see the history and learn of the famous writers and painters, even have your own portrait done, (though looking round this room, maybe not).

At night the French Quarter comes alive with the many restaurants and clubs a different city but still full of fun and incredible atmosphere.

EIGHT. New Orleans is Jazz and so much more.

Walking around the French Quarter at night the air is filled with the sound of Jazz and music from every restaurant and club you go past , there is so much to see, so many restaurants and clubs you will be hard pressed to get an early night. You can enjoy a Hurricane cocktail in Paddy O'Brian's while listening to the two pianists on

the two grand pianos or simply sit and enjoy the Jazz being played in the home of Jazz.

SEVEN. New Orleans is a Walkabout city.

Most of the hotels are in **walking** distance of both the French Quarter and the Convention Centre. The Plenary sessions and House of Friendship are **in the** Convention centre so you can walk from one hall to the other. You can also take a walk **down** the Mississippi while shopping at in over two hundred shops at the Riverside Shopping Centre.

SIX. You can see and experience first hand rotary at work.

If you would like to **give** some Rotary Service before or after the convention then look at the arrangements the Host Club have organised for you to help in the rebuilding of their **community**. Since Katrina, hundreds of US Rotarians have spent time in New Orleans to lend a hand.

FIVE. Because New Orleans is Romantic.

I see I have the ladies attention but the men are going to sleep. Yes New Orleans is Romantic. For that reason RIBI President Jim has changed the format of the RIBI **Breakfast** and is taking his team on a cruise down the Mississippi on the Historic Steamboat Naschez. He has asked me to extend an invitation to you all to join him. Leaving Saturday morning at 8 a.m. you will enjoy a full English breakfast while being entertained by a five piece Jazz Band. **Ladies** get your partners to take you out every night for a special meal and **then** take a stroll around the French Quarter, I am **sure** that then even he will see the romance of the city.

FOUR. Because New Orleans is affordable and Family Friendly.

There are hotels to fit every **pocket** giving a Variety of prices and the same applies to everywhere you go whether you are buying a Mardi Gras mask, a string of beads or just taking a ride in the **many** horse drawn coaches. New Orleans has something for everyone whether it is the history, the amazing **architecture**, the parks, aquarium, world class zoo, the Mardi Gras Museum or one of the 50 other museums, you will not be bored.

THREE. Because of the food.

New Orleans is a gastronomic adventure not to be missed, **food** is a big focus and the cuisine is truly all its own. There are over 1000 restaurants that's an average of 5 per city **block**.

New Orleans is the meeting place for Cajun or Creole **food** which tends to focus on seafood, oysters, crawfish and catfish all with a **spicy** flair. And a crawfish boil, is not just a meal but an experience.

TWO. We need to let the people of New Orleans know we have not forgot them.

New Orleanians would rather look to the future than dwell on the past, but they still need to know that the world cares about them.

Much, but not all of the debris has been removed, your visit signals that you're not afraid to look at devastation and that you're visionary enough to see a hopeful future.

Sometimes we all just need a hug. By coming to New Orleans you will be giving them a big hug.

ONE. It's where Rotarians from every corner of the world will "Let the good times Roll again"

The number one reason to attend the 102nd Rotary International Convention is the fellowship you will receive from your fellow members **from** all over the world. Making new friends and renewing old friendship is the name of the game, something **few** people ever have the opportunity to experience. **President** Ray, the RI Staff and the Host Organising Committee have put a great programme together for you.

So join President Ray and Judie in May next year

AND LET THE GOOD TIME ROLL AGAIN.