



Contact: Amie Hacker,
Communications Manager
Corpus Christi Convention & Visitors Bureau
361-881-1870 office
361-290-5244 cell
361-888-4998 fax
amieh@cctexas.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Cool & Casual Convention in *Corpus Christi*

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX – Located approximately 143 miles south of San Antonio, along Texas' tropical Gulf Coast, Corpus Christi is the premiere destination for meetings promising fun and sun in a casual atmosphere with competitive rates year round. Corpus Christi is the largest coastal city in the state and has a diverse cultural setting, providing a mixture of things to do between meetings. The tropical climate and atmosphere attracts attendees through its extremely competitive rates, especially November through February when compared to other beach destinations. The average hotel room rate in Corpus Christi according to Smith Travel Research for 2007 is \$76.94, providing a bargain when compared to the nationwide average of \$107.51 and other coastal destinations like Galveston, Texas with an average room rate of \$111.60. Even compared to the state average across Texas at \$89.50, Corpus Christi's rate provides a savings for groups and leisure travelers year round. That's why Corpus Christi remains one of the top ten tourist destination in the state of Texas with over seven million visitors a year.

Access to Corpus Christi is another plus, when compared to other statewide coastal destinations. Cities like Galveston and South Padre Island do not provide direct airline services like Corpus Christi and visitors must fly into Houston, Brownsville or Harlingen and then commute. The Corpus Christi International Airport is a convenient short drive of less than 20 minutes to downtown and beaches with major airline services that offer direct connections to Dallas, Atlanta and Houston.

No wonder the United States Bowling Congress (USBC) hosted their 2006 Championship in Corpus Christi, bringing over 67,000 bowlers and 200,000+ visitors. The USBC met in the American Bank Center, a complex that encompasses 500,000 square feet of event space with a convention center, a multi-purpose arena and a historical auditorium. This spacious complex, completed and fully renovated in 2003, offers 76,000 square feet of exhibit hall space, 25,000 square feet of banquet hall space, 20,000 square feet ballroom space and 22 breakout rooms nestled in the heart of the historical downtown district overlooking the bay. Over 40,000 square feet of pre-function hall space is conveniently adjacent to the multi-purpose arena that seats up to 10,000 comfortably, making it *a breeze* for any large conference.

The Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz International Center is another viable alternative located on the Port of Corpus Christi Ship Channel and adjacent to the American Bank Center Convention Center. This International Center offers a unique setting for groups featuring a soundproof, flexible meeting space for groups of up to 2,000 with a banquet hall and outdoor plaza. The meeting rooms range from 580 to 16,555 square feet.

This cool and casual destination, with an average temperature of 71 degrees year round offers almost 11,000 hotel and condo guest rooms, including the 14 new additional limited-service properties in various stages of construction. Several accommodations also provide a beachfront escape for guests, including the Best Western Marina Grand Hotel that was recently renovated in 2006. This convenient downtown property showcases the Bayfront view with 173 contemporary rooms and almost 5,000 square feet of stylish meeting space. The Omni Corpus Christi Hotel also recently completed an extensive renovation to its 821 rooms and the 38,000 square feet meeting space. The Omni Bayfront Tower, a sister property located just seconds from the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, creates a convenient overflow for meeting guests. The Holiday Inn Corpus Christi Airport Hotel and Conference Center, only minutes from the

Corpus Christi International Airport, provides 237 rooms and 12,000 square feet of meeting space. This spacious property also features a nightclub available for group rentals along with a separate ballroom that can accommodate up to 500 guests.

New Accommodations

La Quinta	10446 IH 37 Access Rd.	Opened Winter 06
La Quinta	546 SPID	Opened Winter 06
Bahia Mar	15201 Windward Dr.	Opened Summer 06
Comfort Suites	15209 Windward Drive	Opened Fall 06
Value Place Hotel	1026 SPID	Opened Spring 07
Hilton Garden Inn	6717 SPID	Opened Spring 07
Red Roof Inn	3030 Buffalo St.	Opened Spring 07
Marriot Courtyard	5133 Flynn Pkwy	Opened Spring 08
Candlewood Suites	5014 Crosstown	Opened Spring 08
Hampton Inn & Suites	917 N. Navigation Blvd.	Opened Spring 08
Staybridge Suites	Tiger Lane/Oakhurst Dr.	<i>Opening in 2008</i>
Comfort Suites	1814 Ennis Joslin	<i>Opening in 2008</i>
Holiday Inn Express	13425 Brookhaven Dr.	<i>Opening in 2008</i>
Hilton Ocean House Resort	North Beach	<i>Opening in 2008</i>

UNIQUE MEETING VENUES & ATTRACTIONS

Fortunately, Corpus Christi has a variety of unique meeting venues for groups looking to experience Texas' Gulf Coast first-hand. For history buffs or SMERF (social, military, educational, religious and fraternal) types of groups, the USS Lexington is the perfect place to host a meeting. This World War II aircraft carrier docked in Corpus Christi Bay is set as a permanent skyline figure of downtown and is locally known as the 'Blue Ghost' for it's blue mysterious hue at night. Groups can tour this unique museum, watch a film in the three-story MEGA Theater or visit the food court and gift shop during between meetings. The USS Lexington boasts a more than 40,000 square feet of meeting space for special events, memorials & reunions.

Groups can discover the amazing underwater world at the Texas State Aquarium with accommodations for up to 250 guests indoor and up to 3,000 outdoor. Everyone has the chance to get up close and personal with the Atlantic bottlenose dolphins when renting the Underwater Viewing Room. Between meetings visitors can tour this living, unique aquarium and see over 250 species in entertaining and educational exhibits. This attraction boasts a location that is right in the middle of it all in the downtown entertainment district overlooking the glimmering bay.

Sports fanatics will surely enjoy a special event at Whataburger Field, home of the Houston Astros-affiliated Double-A Baseball team, the Corpus Christi Hooks. This family-friendly stadium provides 5,050 fixed seats, 19 luxury suites and two outfield berm areas to accommodate 2,000 fans. The ballpark provides impressive features to keep the little ones busy with a kids' zone, interactive playground, a basketball playing surface and a high climbing rock wall. The APEX pool and spa with a covered outdoor party deck and the new Champion Club with a bird's-eye view at the first base-line is a great private area for group pre-game functions. Youth groups can take advantage of the magnificent baseball field at Whataburger Field with the capabilities of scaling it down to youth baseball standards. Treat your VIPs to the Owner's Experience at Whataburger Field and witness what goes on behind the scenes at a professional sporting event. From talking with Hooks staff members to pre-game dining in the Cotton Club and taking a private tour of the home clubhouse and press box, the Hooks Owner's Experience offers up an in-depth examination of team and stadium operations. To catch a game, visit the Whataburger Field from April to September each year during the Hook's season offering over 70 fun-filled games.

The Art Museum of South Texas is known as a sparkling venue that celebrates art and offers an unparalleled view of the Corpus Christi Bay and is also another unique place to host a meeting. The H-E-B Auditorium is a perfect site to host up to 200 guests for conferences, meetings and lectures. For smaller groups interested in a banquet style event, utilize the museum's Ahuja/Chapman Banquet room overlooking the Bay. The Art Museum of South Texas is the only

museum in the world that combines the talents of internationally acclaimed architects Ricardo Legorreta and Philip Johnson. Between meetings, the Museum is open for tours daily displaying over 1,300 permanent collection pieces and a variety of traveling exhibitions. The Museum is next door to the American Bank Center Convention Center and is a perfect retreat for lunch at the new Dobson Café, the only museum café in South Texas.

Feeling lucky? Try out the ultimate Las Vegas Casino Experience... Texas style, aboard the Texas Treasure Casino cruise liner located a short 15 miles from downtown Corpus Christi in Port Aransas. Enjoy the unique entertainment experience and atmosphere with an international buffet on a 9.2 mile voyage. Groups are sure to enjoy the high-energy casino action and live entertainment with over 500 hot slots and more than 24 table games. The Texas Coast party experience is a great get-a-way after a long day of meetings with shuttles that run everyday to and from downtown Corpus Christi, giving groups the opportunity to travel at their leisure.

The South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, a 180 acre site along the Oso Creek, sets the perfect backdrop for a perfect event under the big Texas stars. The nature center contains over 5,000 roses, hibiscus and orchids with a bird and butterfly trail, a wetland boardwalk and an indoor meeting room. This growing facility also provides a spacious grassed event-friendly site with adequate parking space for large groups and events. Dance with the butterflies in their new Butterfly Conservatory, scheduled to open late summer 2008.

A recently renovated property that opened in November 2007, the Courtyard at Gaslight Square, offers three areas within its event center: the outside venue known as the Courtyard accommodates up to 240 guests, the indoor Gaslight Room provides space for up to 140 people and the Plaza Room accommodates as many as 120 guests. This event center offers a combined space of 15,000 square feet and provides a French-style elegance conveniently located near downtown.

Another venue that offers up a unique experience is the Concrete Street Amphitheater located in the downtown entertainment district. The Old Market Pavilion at Concrete Street is one of Corpus Christi's premier mid-size venues that offer a covered pavilion to host up to 2,000 guests. The Old Market Pavilion also features a spacious area for a dance floor and a stage for a live band. Concrete Street is one of the many venues that host concert events year round, creating an exciting night life in Corpus Christi. The venue offers full-service event planning, in-house gourmet catering or outside catering, free parking, decoration set up and entertainment procurement to assist in planning any mid-size event.

SPORTS

With a wide variety of sports teams in Corpus Christi, everyone is sure to have a great time year round. Home to the Corpus Christi Sharks, an arena football2 team in their second season offers fun-filled games for all ages at the American Bank Center Arena. Catch a Shark's game from April until August during their season. Celebrating their tenth season in Corpus Christi within the Central Hockey League, the Corpus Christi Rayz provides a full season of 32 games on ice at the American Bank Center Arena from October until late March. Their first year in the Southland Conference, the Texas A&M-Corpus Christi Islanders men basketball team took home the title as Champions of the tournament in the 2006-2007 season. The men and women seasons are from November until late March at the American Bank Center Arena. The all-time American tradition of baseball is another option when visiting Corpus Christi. Whataburger Field is home to the Corpus Christi Hooks, owned by National Baseball Hall of Famer, Nolan Ryan. The Corpus Christi Hooks celebrated their Texas League Championship in their second year and are currently in their fourth season. The Corpus Christi Hooks have an impressive season of 70 games that run from April until September.

NATURE & THE OUTDOORS

Not only does Corpus Christi provide a wide array of sporting activities, almost half of the visitors each year flock to Corpus Christi for the outdoor opportunities. Because Corpus Christi is located in the ideal spot for traveling birds to stop for rest and fuel before taking the road south where most of them winter, the city has been known as the 'Birdiest City in America' consistently since 2003. No wonder the birds and bird watchers come back each year to Corpus Christi, there is a bit of almost every needed habitat to keep just about anybody and any bird content with beaches, rivers, plains, lakes, chaparral and swamps with a great tropical climate. The Coastal Bend alone provides an impressive 153 nature sites for outdoor lovers to hike, tour and explore. Not only does Corpus Christi host the most species in the sky, it is also the home of the longest undeveloped barrier island in the world with public access to more than 120 miles of beachfront, known as the Padre Island National Seashore. This long stretch along the Texas Gulf Coast is the perfect setting to catch some rays, enjoy horseback riding or relax with an evening scenic drive by car.

Corpus Christi is also one of the prime locations in the nation to breeze across the water on a sailboat while watching the dolphins play alongside your vessel with prevailing southeast winds that average 20-30 mph year round. Thrill seekers are encouraged to join the thousands of visitors from around the world for the ultimate experience of windsurfing, kite surfing and parasailing. You will find that if it has a sail on it and it belongs in the water, you are sure to find it in the Corpus Christi Bay. The Corpus Christi Yachting Center offers sailing lessons, charters and spectacular sunset dinner cruises for anyone interested. Several windsurfing and kite surfing shops in the area give lessons and provide convenient equipment rentals for visitors.

ANNUAL EVENTS

The most significant tradition, Buccaneer Days, celebrates the Spaniards' discovery and naming of the Corpus Christi Bay. The initial three-day celebration that began in 1938 is now held in the later part of April consisting of 12 days. Home to the "Richest Little Rodeo in Texas", Buccaneer Days hosts well-recognized PRCA Cowboys every year as they compete for the biggest Rodeo purse in Texas. The rodeo consists of 16 events, as well as a Grand Entry, Mutton Bustin', Calf Scramble, Pony Express and Entertainment. Buccaneer Days also consists of an illuminated parade that draws some 150,000 spectators to downtown Corpus Christi and a spectacular fireworks display over the Corpus Christi Marina. There will be plenty of zesty Mexican food and native cuisine with arts and craft vendors along Shoreline Boulevard. The carnival provides several gut-wrenching rides and a Ferris Wheel with an unforgettable view of the Gulf of Mexico. Visitors always enjoy the BBQ Challenge as they sample the mouth watering flavors and cast their vote for the People's Choice Award at the festival. New this year, Buccaneer Days will host a Competencia Folklorica Del Mar Mexican Folklorico Competition at the historical Selena Auditorium.

A short stroll from Buccaneer Days, everyone can enjoy the four day spending spree at the Texas International Boat Show along the Corpus Christi downtown Marina. In-water boats, onshore exhibits, million dollar coaches, RVs, a static aircraft display and an auto show featuring the very latest in today's cars and trucks will be on display.

In May Corpus Christi hosts two of the biggest outdoor sporting events drawing athletes to the Texas coast from around the world. The US Wind & Water Open features the National Championships & US title in wind & water extreme sports at McGee Beach. Windsurfing, kite boarding, skateboarding and wake boarding are just a few of the categories offered at this event. The Annual Beach to Bay Marathon is a 26 point-to-point relay route divided into six legs that begins on North Padre Island and ends at Cole Park along Corpus Christi's scenic downtown. The race has grown in immense proportions since 1976, drawing 1,543 teams in 2007, totaling over 9,000 runners and attracts participants from Kenya, England, Mexico and Canada.

Thousands of nature lovers celebrate the conservation of birds at the Great Texas Birding Classic each year along the Gulf Coast. Sponsored by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, the event coincides with the spectacular spring bird migration in Texas. Teams vie to see who can spot and record the most bird species in a given time period. The adult teams with the highest species counts wins the privilege of choosing the conservation projects that will be awarded for the coming year. Last year the Great Texas Birding Classic donated over \$50,000 to eight habitat conservation projects that will preserve and protect important coastal habitats for many years to come.

LOCAL CUISINE

With so much to see in Corpus Christi, it's no wonder visitors work up an appetite and venture out to some of the finest restaurants in the state. The Corpus Christi coast is known for its fresh 'catches of the day' on most local menus, but the area also offers mesquite-grilled entrées and smoky barbecue. With a close proximity to Mexico, many find the 'Tex Mex' native menu of Mexican food somewhat adventurous. Seafood enchiladas, shrimp tacos, sushi with a jalapeño kick and a good ol' Texas steak cooked to perfection are just a few of the favorites on the menu in Corpus Christi.

Most famous for its "blackboard" fresh fish specials, Water Street Oyster Bar and its sister restaurant Water Street Food Company, share a reputation for "Best Seafood". The Oyster Bar and Food Company are located in downtown Corpus Christi and is one of the most popular eateries in town. Specialties include their gulf shrimp, crab cakes and seafood enchiladas. Their new sushi bar has gained an impressive reputation quickly with signature rolls that have a Mexican flare of native spices.

For the “meat and potatoes” kind of diners, Katz 21 Steak & Spirits is the promising choice with an atmosphere you would expect to find in a large metropolitan city. Katz 21 offers a traditional steak specializing in dry aged corn-fed Midwestern Prime beef and a variety of seafood, pasta, lamb and veal. They honor their namesake ‘Steak & Spirits’ by adding a delicate gourmet selection of ‘Spirit Sauces’ to enhance any entrée. Live jazz and much more fills the next door lounge every Thursday through Saturday.

Kick back and enjoy the life of a South Texas surfer at the Executive Surf Club & Billiards. This popular upbeat spot located downtown is the perfect casual place to drop by for lunch and throughout the late evening. There is usually live entertainment on the open-air stage with a variety of music. The Executive Surf Club is a great place to unwind with their outdoor patio or inside the dining room. This eatery is known best for their specialty burgers, quesadillas and Happy Hour.

It’s a site to see at twenty floors above the downtown streets of Corpus Christi at the Republic of Texas Bar & Grill on the top of the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel Bayfront. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer a stunning view of the Corpus Christi Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Live piano music provided from Wednesday through Saturday and the Four-Diamond Restaurant service sets the perfect atmosphere for any occasion. The Republic of Texas boasts a menu of free-range game dishes, steaks and fresh seafood.

Groups will have plenty of activities to choose from during breaks no matter what their interests may be. In Corpus Christi choose from exploring over 120 miles of seashores to getting up close and personal with the bottlenose dolphins at the Texas State Aquarium or catch a glimpse of the past and tour the only replica in the world of the Christopher Columbus Fleet at the Museum of Science & History. Nature lovers can indulge in bird-watching and botanical hikes, while thrill seekers can experience sailing, windsurfing or parasailing. Escape, explore and experience the affordable Corpus Christi, where you can have it all.

###

The Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau’s mission is “to drive overnight visitor\$ to the Corpus Christi Area”. For more information about the Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau or to plan your next trip to Corpus Christi, visit www.corpuschristicvb.com or call 1-800-678-6232.