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# ON the SCENE

MARRIOTT CRN NEW ORLEANS

NEIGHBORING MEETINGS HOTELS SHOW OFF NEW ORLEANS' ECLECTIC CULTURE

By Eric Andersen

"There is no city in the world like New Orleans," wrote *New York Times* travel editor Dan Saltzstein in his entry on the iconic U.S. destination, which ranked No. 1 on the publication's 52 Places to Go in 2018 list.

After visiting New Orleans on a press trip with the Marriott Convention & Resort Network—my first time

divisible into three sections and can accommodate up to 3,600 people for receptions and 1,800 for banquets. The Marriott's space leans toward the modern and sophisticated side of the design spectrum, with some splashes of New Orleans' flair.

The Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, which is located across the street from the Marriott and became part of Marriott's CRN following the Marriott-Starwood merger, offers more than 105,000 square feet of space. Its Grand Ballroom can hold up to 2,000 people for receptions and 2,100 in a theater-style setup. Many of the Sheraton's meeting rooms feature a New Orleans theme and a more casual, relaxed vibe.

Each hotel offers the amenities and services you'd expect from a Marriott or Sheraton property, and staff were friendly and accommodating at both. Scott Jemstrom and John Brewster, directors of sales and marketing at the Marriott and Sheraton hotels, respectively, served as our press trip tour guides.

Jemstrom and Brewster's interactions showed that the two properties, while at one time competitors, are also very aware of their relative strengths and weaknesses and know how to work together to best

navigating the city!—I'd have to agree with Saltzstein in his assessment. The Southern staple, which is turning 300 this year, provides a diverse and captivating mix of culture, music, history and cuisine.

Since New Orleans has so much to offer, it would be easy to get overwhelmed exploring the city, especially if you're

just in town for a meeting or event. That's where the New Orleans Marriott and the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel truly shine with their respective Canal

Street locations providing easy access to much of New Orleans' off-site establishments that extend far beyond Bourbon Street.

First up, though, let's review what the two Marriott CRN properties in New Orleans—the 1,333-room New Orleans Marriott and the 1,110-room Sheraton New Orleans Hotel—can offer groups.

The New Orleans Marriott offers 86,849 square feet of meeting space across 50 event rooms. Its 27,808-square-foot Grand Ballroom is one of the largest in the city. The ballroom is

accommodate groups depending on their individual needs and budgets. Todd Sherstad, former director of Marriott's CRN, served as the "father figure" of our trip, dropping knowledge on the network itself.

One important takeaway for groups is that all of the Marriott CRN properties are generally accommodating in planners' requests for a post-con Internet usage

report. This report shows how much bandwidth a group used while meeting at the property, which sounds like a great benefit to planners.

But enough about bandwidth! Our group was also able to take part in a progressive lunch tour with stops at Acme Oyster House, Tableau and Bacchanal

Fine Wine & Spirits via foot and pedicab. Acme seemed especially accommodating to groups with reception space available for up to 200 people.

If you have a group made up of sports fans, the Mercedes-Benz Superdome can be an exciting location for a special event or stadium tour. We even managed to catch a New Orleans Saints game.

And lastly, if your group is more interested in blending in with the locals, our media group discovered that



NEW ORLEANS MARRIOTT



NEW ORLEANS MARRIOTT ARRIVAL



SHERATON NEW ORLEANS HOTEL GRAND BALLROOM



NEW ORLEANS MARRIOTT BREAKFAST



NEW ORLEANS MARRIOTT EVENT SPACE



SHERATON NEW ORLEANS HOTEL

a bus tour of the Garden District can provide a nice escape from all the tourists on Bourbon Street.

No matter what you hope to accomplish while in New Orleans, the use of the Marriott New Orleans or the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel as a central meetings hub will likely steer you in the right direction. **■**



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