

# 2010 NGAUS CONFERENCE

## **AUSTIN AWAITS!**

*This year's NGAUS conference features the unique sights, sounds and tastes of the Texas capital*

**By Richard Arnold**  
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And the music continues.

For anyone who didn't get enough music at last year's NGAUS conference in Nashville, Tenn., America's Country Music Capital, this year's gathering is just the ticket.

The setting moves 800 miles southwest to Austin, Texas, known as the Live Musical Capital of the World.

This university town combines a friendly, laid-back ambience with a rich history and just a touch of bravado where citizens adhere to the state's unofficial slogan, "Everything is Bigger in Texas."

Austin attracts more than 11 million visitors annually. This year, that will include attendees at the 132nd NGAUS General Conference and Exhibition from Aug. 21 to 23. This will be the third time the Lone Star state has hosted the event. The conference was held in San Antonio in 1959 and 1988.

Texas National Guard organizers and city and state officials are eager to please an expected record conference crowd.

"We are really excited to host the conference," says Ray Lindner, conference chairman and executive director of the Texas National Guard state association.

Lindner says hosting one of the largest state Guard association conferences has helped him and his staff prepare for the NGAUS conference.

## **THE CITY**

In 1839, five mounted scouts searched a broad area of wilderness seeking a site for a new capital city of Texas. They chose a location on the north bank of the Colorado River. The city was named to honor Stephen F. Austin, who

is known as the Father of Texas. A few months later, archives and furniture from the seat of Texas government in Houston were transported to Austin in ox-drawn wagons.

Today, the city lives up to its billing as the Live Music Capital of the World. Austin jumps and pulsates with blues, country, reggae, jazz, conjunto, Tejano, swing and rock in nearly 200 live music venues around the city, including nightspots along Sixth Street and the Warehouse District.

Austin is home to one of the nation's largest universities, the University of Texas, where student enrollment is more than 45,000 and football is a religion. Hook'em Horns!

The state capitol is only a few blocks from campus. Of course, Lindner likes to remind folks that the building is 14 feet taller than the U.S. Capitol.

Austin also is home to North America's largest urban bat population. Up to 1.5 million Mexican free-tail bats create a daily spectacle downtown at sunset with a mass exodus from underneath the Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge.

## **THE CONFERENCE**

Most attendees will arrive at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, which is eight miles southeast of downtown Austin. Located on the site of the former Bergstrom Air Force Base, it was the first conversion of an Air Force base in the U.S. to commercial airport after the end of the Cold War.

Ground transportation from the airport to the hotels will be provided on travel days, Aug. 19, 20 and 24. The estimated taxi rate between the airport and host hotels is \$22. A super-shuttle discount is also available. There's no need for a rental car, as Austin is considered a pedestrian-friendly city.

Thirteen hotels will accommodate conference attendees, and the 900,000-square-foot Austin Convention Center will house most conference events. Lindner says additional rooms are available for industry representatives.

The industry exhibition will be held in Exhibit Halls 1 through 5 of the convention center, below Grand Ballroom D through G where the business sessions will be held.

The Sponsors' Golf Tournament on Aug. 19 will be held at The Golf Club at Star Ranch in nearby Hutto. The NGAUS Tournament on Aug. 20 will be played at the White Wing and Legacy golf courses in Georgetown.

Other activities on Aug. 20 include the Adjutants General Dinner at the historic Driskill Hotel, built by a rich cattleman in 1886, followed by entertainment at Austin's oldest surviving theater, the Paramount, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

For the first time in recent memory, the Company Grade and Warrant Officer Mixer will be split into separate events on Aug 20.

Known as the oldest business in Texas and the last of the "great Biergartens" in Austin, the Scholz Garten, operating since 1866, is site of the company grade mixer. The warrant officer mixer will take place at Stubb's Bar-B-Q, known for its cold beer, live music and unforgettable barbecue.

Events begin early Aug. 21 with a Fun Run starting at 6 a.m. While it will not be an official timed race, runners can meet at the Radisson Hotel before heading across the Colorado River to the trails of scenic Lady Bird Park. The trails are mostly flat, fairly wide and very popular.

Even if you can't make the run, take along your running shoes as Austin was named one of the top trail cities in the U.S. by *Trail Runner* magazine.

The annual area meeting and caucuses begin at 9:30 a.m., Aug. 21. The trade show ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place at 10:30 a.m., followed by a brunch. Officer professional development is also scheduled for the morning before the First Business Session, which begins at noon.

As always, NGAUS will invite key lawmakers and defense leaders to speak.

The Governor's Reception at the Travis County Expo Center on Aug. 21 might be the highlight of the conference. Guests will enjoy a Texas-style beef barbecue accompanied with dessert chuck wagons.

"We want to give our guests a taste of things that are purely Texas," says Lindner.

Afterwards, a full-scale rodeo will take place in the climate-controlled arena. There will be calf roping, team roping, steer dogging, bareback riding, barrel racing, bull riding and mutton busting.

Other acts include a square dancing troupe, a U.S. marshall's "posse" and, of course, live music by performers to be announced at a later date.

The Spouse's Luncheon has been replaced by the Spouse Adventure on Aug.

22. It offers a choice of one of four half-day diversions, including the Riverwalk Ramble, which is a visit to San Antonio, with stops at the Alamo and Riverwalk; San Marcos Tanger Outlet Center; Historic Fredericksburg; and The Domain, a luxury shopping center in Austin.

Participants will receive a \$20 Visa gift card to kick off their “adventure.”

Later that evening is Hospitality Night in several hotel suites around town. Shuttle buses will run continuously between the hotels until 11 p.m.

The annual States Dinner will close the conference Aug. 23 with a steak dinner described as “Texas formal,” so bring your cowboy hat and boots!

And don’t forget to bring the kids! There is plenty to see for those still on summer break.

A “Backpack Journalist” program is available for all kids ages 13 to 18. This hands-on experience will combine news gathering, writing and photography.

The NGAUS gathering will be one of the largest conferences in Austin for the year, and Lindner promises the city will welcome the Guard with open arms.

## **BEYOND THE CONFERENCE**

According to *Forbes* magazine, Austin is the country’s No. 1 place to get the “best bang for your buck.”

There is plenty to explore. And you can see much of Austin by walking or taking advantage of the public transit system.

And if you’d like a guided tour, Austin Duck Adventures offers a tour through the historic streets of Austin before splashing down into Lake Austin for a leisurely cruise.

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum features exhibits and interactive experiences that trace Texas history. A 400-seat IMAX Theater features 3-D films.

Sixth Street is the famous entertainment district with restaurants, clubs and shops that is closed to auto traffic every evening. Nightlife in this area, which is included on the National Register, draws large crowds. Other must-see areas include the Warehouse and Red River Entertainment districts.

“Keep Austin Weird” is a popular phrase in the city and nowhere is this more

evident than The Drag, located across the street from the University of Texas and a popular place for people watching.

The Texas Military Forces Museum features an extensive collection of artifacts that detail Texas' military history, from the Alamo to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden is an indoor/outdoor museum that displays 150 examples of works by Charles Umlauf. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is also a mandatory stop for nature lovers. The Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum is located nearby as part of the University of Texas.

One of Austin's hippest hangouts is South Congress or "SoCo," a stretch of Congress Avenue lined with quirky shops, trendy dining spots, art galleries and music venues.

Texas Guard organizers are confident that their plans and Austin's attractions will combine to make conference-goers want to return to the Lone Star State.

"We want people to say 'Wow, that was an awesome conference,'" Lindner says.

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## **REGISTRATION**

NGAUS members should register through their state associations. Exhibitors and industry reps must register at [www.ngaus-registration.com](http://www.ngaus-registration.com). Conference registration is \$165. This covers admission to all business sessions, the exhibition, the Governor's Reception, the Company Grade or Warrant Officer mixers and the States Dinner. Most other activities are extra.

## **FLIGHTS**

Use Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) for commercial air travel. It offers nonstop service from 36 destinations using nine commercial airlines. Please consider using NGAUS Travel ([www.ngaustravel.com](http://www.ngaustravel.com)), which shares profits with NGAUS and the state associations.

## **GROUND TRANSPORTATION**

A free shuttle will be provided to registered conference attendees on the main travel days of Aug. 19, 20 and 24. Taxis are an option for other days. Expect to pay about \$22. Another option is the Super Shuttle, which offers an online discount of 10 percent from Aug. 17 to Aug. 24. Go to [www.supershuttle.com](http://www.supershuttle.com) or [execucar.com](http://execucar.com) to make reservations. Use group-discount code 3VK2L.

## **EXHIBIT BOOTH SALES**

Prospective exhibitors should contact the show manager at Exhibit Promotions Plus, Inc. at (410) 997-0763 or via e-mail at [ngaus@epponline.com](mailto:ngaus@epponline.com). A prospectus, registration