

Denver, First Look

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The venues for future annual scientific meetings are chosen years in advance by the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the time. They review venue bids against a range of criteria and with the aim of finding suitable locations around the United States or, occasionally, in Canada. Although not the largest of conferences, our meetings are substantial and require meticulous planning to ensure that all the required rooms are allocated for the plenary lectures, the scientific sessions, the committee meetings, the Society lunches and various receptions. It is also important that appropriate spaces are identified for the scientific posters and exhibitions and facilities are available for the AsMA Wing and their activities.

In August we held the site visit for the next year's meeting in Denver and we stayed at the hotel we will be using as our headquarters. It was a fascinating experience to see the complex co-ordinated planning of the operation of hotel facilities, AsMA leadership, events management, and the essential audio-visual and exhibition infrastructure come together. I have attended numerous annual scientific meetings of the Association and, as a member of the Executive Committee, have had some insight into the cycle of planning and delivery of this crucial component of our service to members and delegates. Even so, it was a revelation to witness the line-by-line checking of requirements, facilities, and responsibilities. We all take for granted that in large plenary lectures, and each of seven parallel scientific sessions, there will be the essential dais, lectern, microphones, seats, water, and more. Yet each item has to be identified and put in place. During 30 minute breaks, hundreds of delegates require coffee before the next session starts. Numerous lunches are prepared and served, receptions and dinners presented later in each day. These are essential professional and social functions of our Association, which add to the value of the event, but all require organization and forethought.

It is also worth remembering that holding these functions within the corpus of the hotel complex helps to defray the cost of our conference. If we do not bring enough business to the hotel we will face large facility charges and that would have to be reflected in increases in the registration fee in the future. So it is in our own interest to utilize the facilities available within the hotel. Whilst in no way discouraging you from exploring the towns and cities we visit, business that can be included within our use of the conference hotel has advantages for the Association and improves the scope for future meetings.

Having held this year's August ExCom meeting in Denver, all the committee members have a clear picture of the location and its facilities. We can all act as informed ambassadors to tell you about the venue, which is excellent and comprehensive. There are plenty of professional and social spaces and facilities within the Sheraton hotel and its two towers. Denver is a great city, sitting in

an outstanding location. The city and the state offer an outstanding location in all respects. If you have time, either before or after the meeting, there is much to be explored and enjoyed which will add to an excellent professional experience.

Denver is easily accessible, served by a string of U.S. and international air carriers. There are direct flights from most major U.S. cities and many international capitals. Arriving in Denver from the UK was very straight-forward. There is a new, fast, low cost light railway connection from the airport to the downtown and a free bus service from its terminus to the hotel. For those arriving from outside the United States, it was very pleasing to find that ESTA holders could use automated passport counters to speed the immigration process. It was one of the smoothest entries to the United States I have ever had.

As the Colorado state capital, Denver boasts some fine buildings and great recreational spaces. In addition to excellent restaurants, cafes, and bars in the hotel there are many other sites elsewhere along 16th Street and further afield, for informal social functions. Located at 5200 ft, Denver is known as the Mile High City, so our altitude physiologists should feel immediately at home. For the less acclimatized, it is something perhaps to remember before pushing your personal physiological limits.

The format of our meeting will be familiar to previous attendees. We are, however, hoping to streamline the Business Meeting on Tuesday lunchtime to create a little more time to allow some committee meetings to take place during the working day rather than at 0700 in the morning. This aims to encourage increased attendance from committee members and those who are simply interested in that committee's activities. I hope to include a few lines about some of the AsMA committees and their roles in future pages, to give a flavour of the great range of activities that these workhorses of the Association carry out and without which we would not be able to offer so much to our membership.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to say that having visited Denver and met the people running the hotel and conference facilities, I am absolutely confident that we will have in 2017 an AsMA meeting venue second to none. I look forward to seeing you all there.



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