

Dear AAZV/AAWV/ARAV/CAZWW/KALAANKAB colleagues

If you are thinking of attending the October 23-29, 2010 meeting for professional reasons, think a bit bigger and include your favorite traveling partners.

South Padre Island and its gems.

Bring your favorite companions a few days early and enjoy the sun, nature and beach activities. The Gulf of Mexico waters will be in the 70's degrees; air temperatures will range between low 70s and high 80s. Perfect weather for fun in the sun! www.sopadre.com

The following items are not organized by the conference, but activities and professional tours that are locally available and recommended by local gurus.

Sand Castle Days is Oct. 21-24, 2010. Amateur and professional sand sculptors from all over the world descend on South Padre Island every year to create beautiful works of art using natural elements of the beach. The not-for-profit event showcases the artwork and an appreciation for the coastal environment, and donates to organizations helping to preserve it.

www.sandcastledays.com

"If you have never seen professional sand castle sculptures in action this is a true treat." (TdM)

For **bird enthusiasts**, enjoy visiting one of the many birding areas around. Over 500 species of birds have been recorded in the 4 counties of the lower Rio Grande Valley. Close to SPI are Laguna Atascosa Wildlife Refuge www.friendsofsouthtexasrefuges.org ; the World Birding Center at Resaca de la Palma State Park www.worldbirdingcenter.org . On SPI are five birding hot spots including the new SPI Birding and Nature Center www.spibirding.com . Travel independently or on a guided tour organized by Martin Hagne of Valley Nature Center www.valleynaturecenter.org .

During the April 2010 midyear meeting the VP of AAZV " saw 40 species in just under 2 hours, adding 11 life birds; highlights were the mottled duck, vermilion flycatcher, reddish egret, black bellied whistling ducks" (WKS)

For **the intrepid birder** take a 2-3 night excursion across the border to the **El Cielo Ecoreserve**. El Cielo is the northern most cloud forest in North America and at the crossroads of 4 major eco regions. Trip will be organized by Roy Rodriguez, an experienced guide of this area.

"One of Mexico's best kept secrets, a biosphere rich in wildlife and nature, clothed in a sea of green in the cloud forests of a unique and mysterious region." (www.mexicolessvisited.com)

If being out on the water is more your style...

Scuba, snorkel or Dolphin Watch and get the chance to view the area's unique sea life in their natural environment. For beginners and experienced divers. The local outfitter, American Diving is offering very low rates for conference participants: dive trips to Iron Reef or Texas

Clipper for \$100-150 pp, snorkeling for \$20, and dolphin watch at \$10 pp.
www.divesouthpadre.com A zoo docent, Mary Laddis will be making reservations at 956-459-8401.

Deep Sea or Bay Fishing Trips: There are numerous varieties of fishing available: Deep sea trophy and red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico; shallow water redfish and speckled trout; or party boats in the Laguna Madre. www.captmurphys.com

All other sorts of aquatic adventure are possible: wave runners, catamarans, sunset cruises, parasails, banana boats, etc. etc.

There are boutique shopping locations and tons of seafood. Gulf shrimp comes out of the water right here! For shrimp cooked in over 25 ways: shrimphaus.com/menu.htm .

Or just sit on the beach.....

Visit these websites for more information!

www.sopadre.com
www.divesouthpadre.com
www.sandcastledays.com
www.friendsofsouthtexasrefuges.org
www.worldbirdingcenter.org
www.spibirding.com
www.valleynaturecenter.org
www.theoriginaldolphinwatch.com
www.captmurphys.com
shrimphaus.com/menu.htm