STATE OF LOUISIANA HOTEL PROGRAM

Portal Instructions

It is important that you read the advisements on the Reservation Form **<u>VERY CAREFULLY</u>**, as it contains important information concerning cancellation policies, refund & nonrefundable conditions and the amount your credit card will be charged, at the time of booking.

You will have to acknowledge that you have read and understand the cancellation policy and payment terms, before the system will allow you to complete the transaction. Please do not click through these advisements, without reading and understanding thoroughly, as your financial consequences can be substantial. Waivers, exceptions and concessions will not be granted, for concerns that are addressed in written portal advisements.

For budgetary compliance and audit purposes, select your appropriate agency affiliation drop-down boxes, for individual and group bookings, as reporting is pulled and audited by individual agencies.

The **DISASTER HOUSING** link at the bottom of the home page will become activated, if the governor declares an emergency. During a disaster, HotelPlanner will operate on a 24/7 basis, to manually accommodate group bookings that are requested through the **DISASTER HOUSING** link.

INDIVIDUAL BOOKINGS INSTRUCTIONS

There are two types of rates available on the portal – Negotiated & Transient Rates.

TRANSIENT RATES

1. These rates are displayed after the negotiated rates, do NOT have an orange banner and can be lower or higher than negotiated rates, subject to the season and city-wide events.
2. While the same hotel may also offer a negotiated rate, transient rates do not fall under the same conditions as the negotiated rates.
3. Request a search for **one (1) room at a time**, as some hotels may have a limited number of rooms at a particular transient rate. You should make separate bookings for each guest. This practice allows more flexibility, should an unexpected cancellation of a room be needed.
4. Select your appropriate agency. Also select your sub-agency, if applicable.
5. Directly beneath the agency drop-downs, you can choose to pay for the reservation with your credit card or choose to have the reservation sent to an approver for approval and payment. See **APPROVAL PROCESS** below, for further instructions regarding this tool.
6. If you choose to use your credit card, you will complete the credit card payment information and your reservation will be confirmed.
7. When reviewing hotel options, click on the public rate, even though the rate may not be within per diem. A new screen will appear that will list all rate options for the hotel. You may find that a government/military rate is available, that is within per diem.
8. Transient rates can be pre-paid (PAY NOW) rates, meaning that your credit card will be charged for the full amount of your reservation, at the time you book the reservation on the portal. Please be mindful of the payment terms displayed on the reservation, before you make your purchase.
9. Additionally, cancellation policies can be very restrictive and should be read and understood thoroughly, as waivers, exceptions and concessions will not be granted, for concerns that are addressed in written portal advisements.
10. You will receive a confirmation receipt and an email, when your online transaction is complete. **Please retain this receipt, for reimbursement purposes.**
11. If you chose a pre-paid (PAY NOW) rate, when you arrive at the hotel, the hotel will not request payment for your room charges. You will have already fully paid for your room charge when you booked your reservation on the portal. **Consequently, it will not be necessary to present a tax exemption certificate to the hotel.** A credit card or cash deposit is required upon check-in, subject to the hotel's *incidental charges* policy.

12. Expect your credit card statement to reflect and the hotel to welcome you as valued HotelPlanner client, Expedia, Hotels.com, or a Book a Bed, etc. client. As HotelPlanner works in partnership with over 30 different clients and suppliers to offer a variety of rate options to the State of Louisiana.

13. Upon check out, the hotel will <u>NOT</u> provide a receipt that displays room charges, as your room charges were paid on the portal. You may request the hotel to provide a statement that shows your check in dates, check out dates and itemized incidental charges (room service, parking, etc.). After your stay, you will receive a 2nd emailed receipt, depicting reservation details and the amount paid for your room charge. It will not include any incidentals paid to the hotel.

14. Confirmed reservations cannot be changed. Should your plans change, cancel your confirmed reservation within the cancellation guidelines, if cancellations are allowable. Then simply make a new reservation, reflecting your revised travel plans. Please know that room availability and/or previous room rates may not be available for your new reservation.

15. To determine if your reservation can be canceled, refer to your reservation confirmation email, to view the cancellation policy.

16. To cancel your reservation, refer to your reservation confirmation email and click the "View or Cancel Reservation" link at the bottom of the email. Input your confirmation number and the email address that was used to make your reservation. Once your reservation displays, click "cancel" and retain your cancellation confirmation for your records. **NOTE:** Some hotels will allow you to cancel a reservation by telephone. Please be aware that should a dispute occur, you will not have a hard-copy cancellation confirmation to support your case.

NEGOTIATED RATES
1. These rates are displayed first and are vividly noted by the bright orange banner that reads, "This hotel rate meets PPM49 guidelines for single occupancy".

2. These rates are specially negotiated with hotels that want a relationship with the State of Louisiana and have agreed to specific terms and conditions.

3. Request a search for **one (1) room at a time**, as some hotels may have a very limited number of rooms allocated at the negotiated rate, on a daily basis. You should make separate bookings for each guest. This practice allows more flexibility, should an unexpected cancellation of a room be needed.

4. Select your appropriate agency. Also select your sub-agency, if applicable.

5. Directly beneath the agency drop-downs you can choose to use your credit card or choose to have the reservation sent to an approver for approval and payment. See **APPROVAL PROCESS** below, for further instructions regarding this tool.

6. If you choose to use your credit card, you will complete the credit card payment information and your reservation will be confirmed. Your credit card is input into the portal to guarantee against a "no show". It is NOT used to pay for your hotel stay. You will need to present your credit card at check-in to pay for your hotel stay.

7. Cancellation policies should be read and understood thoroughly, as waivers, exceptions and concessions will not be granted, for concerns that are addressed in written portal advisements.

8. When you arrive at the hotel, you will need to present your credit card to pay for your hotel stay. Additionally, a credit card or cash deposit is also required upon check-in, subject to the hotel's *incidental charges* policy.

9. State of Louisiana employees are exempt from state taxes, but are still subject to occupancy and city taxes. To qualify for the state rate and to be exempt from state taxes, the hotel reserves the right to require you to present a completed hotel tax exemption form and a state ID, upon check-in. You can access a blank tax exemption form, through a tab on the HOME page of the portal.

10. Upon check-out, the hotel's receipt will list your hotel room charges, as well as incidental charges.

11. Confirmed reservations cannot be changed. Should your plans change, cancel your confirmed reservation within the cancellation guidelines, if cancellations are allowable.   Then simply make a new reservation, reflecting your revised travel plans. Please know that room availability and/or previous room rates may not be available for your new reservation.

12. To determine if your reservation can be canceled, refer to your reservation confirmation email, to view the cancellation policy.

13. To cancel your reservation, refer to your reservation confirmation email and click the "View or Cancel Reservation" link at the bottom of the email. Input your confirmation number and the email address that was used to make your reservation. Once your reservation displays, click "cancel" and retain your cancellation confirmation for your records. **NOTE:** Some hotels will allow you to cancel a reservation by telephone. Please be aware that should a dispute occur, you will not have a hard-copy cancellation confirmation to support your case.

APPROVAL PROCESS

14. This Approval Process tool is NOT automatically available. It is only available to agencies that have chosen to use this tool, by completing the required registration process. Using a credit card on the portal, to book a PAY AT HOTEL rate, only guarantees the reservation against a "no show". The guest will still need to pay for the hotel stay, upon check-in.   This tool is useful when you'd like to make payment arrangements for the guest, so that they are not required to pay the nightly room charge upon check-in, using a PAY AT HOTEL rate. You can choose to advise the hotel to use a credit card or CBA account, via a Credit Card Authorization Form or use a direct bill account that you have previously established with the hotel and previously registered on the portal.

15. If the person initiating the booking chooses to send the booking to an approver, the approver will receive an email prompting them to review the booking and either settle the payment arrangements or reject the booking. The person who initiated the booking will be notified by email from the approver, that the reservation has been confirmed or rejected. Please know that rates are not guaranteed and rooms are not held until the reservation's payments arrangements have been settled.

16. If the approver elects to settle payment arrangements via a credit card or CBA account, the approver simply clicks the "I will use a credit card" button and inputs the account information, to confirm the reservation. The guest will still need a credit card or cash deposit upon check-in, subject to the hotel's *incidental charges* policy.

17. Once the confirmation screen appears, the approver clicks on the "Download Credit Card Authorization" link. A pre-populated credit card authorization form will appear on the screen. The approver can choose to electronically send this form to the hotel through the portal, fax it manually to the hotel, save it to their computer or print and retain for future reference. When the form is sent to the hotel, the system faxes it to the front desk and emails it to pertinent hotel management.

18. It is recommended that a call is made to the hotel's front desk staff to assure the credit card authorization form is received and appropriately attached to the upcoming reservation.

19. If the approver elects to settle payment arrangements via a direct bill account and a direct bill account has been established at the hotel and registered on the portal, the approver simply clicks on the "direct bill button", to confirm the reservation. The guest will still need a credit card or cash deposit upon check-in, subject to the hotel's *incidental charges* policy.

20. Once the confirmation screen appears, the approver must click on the "Download Direct Bill Authorization" link. A prepopulated direct bill authorization form will appear on the screen. The approver can choose to electronically fax this form to the hotel through the portal, fax it manually to the hotel, save it to their computer or print and retain for future reference.

21. It is recommended that a call is made to the hotel's front desk staff to assure the direct bill authorization form is received and appropriately attached to the upcoming reservation.

22. Whether the credit card authorization form or the direct bill authorization form is utilized, the guest will still need a credit card or cash deposit upon check-in, subject to the hotel's *incidental charges* policy.

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GROUP BOOKINGS INSTRUCTIONS

The system is extremely user-friendly for booking groups. You no longer have to call a list of hotels, nor receive phone calls from hotels that are not under consideration.

1. On the portal's HOME PAGE, input the destination city, check-in & check-out dates and number of rooms (must be 9+ for a group) and click "Continue". NOTE: Once the **Meeting Quotation Request** page displays, you may decrease the rooms needed to a minimum of 5.
2. Select your agency from the drop-down boxes.
3. Confirm the number of rooms needed. There is NO maximum, but you may decrease to a minimum of 5.
4. Select if singles or doubles are required.
5. Select GOVERNMENT as the group type.
6. Select the star rating you will consider.
7. Input the maximum rate you will consider.
8. Select if meeting space is required or not. If meeting space is required, complete the pop-up screen. You may add as many meeting rooms, as needed.
9. Confirm your destination city and dates of travel.
10. **Additional Requests or Comments; 1st box** - Do NOT list a "specific" hotel for consideration, as you want to negotiate from a position of strength. However, if there is a specific geographic area you'd like to consider, you may indicate it here.
11. **Additional Requests or Comments; 2nd box –** Here you may list additional needs, such as complimentary breakfast, complimentary parking, meals, rooms with a kitchen, inside corridors, etc. Expect hotels that cannot offer your requests to still respond to your lead, as that is a part of the negotiating process.
12. Provide your name and telephone number. Hotels cannot view your identity information. So you will not receive hotel phone calls.
13. Provide your email address and a password. You will enter this email and password on the HOME PAGE, when you return to the system to log in and view hotel bid responses.
14. Click "Send My Request" and your lead is sent to hotels in your destination city. Remember hotel sales managers generally respond to group leads during normal business hours.
15. Hotels will bid on your lead, by placing a rate in the system. You will receive an email each time a bid is received within your maximum budget, along with a link that will connect you to your group request. You may also log into the system, from the HOME PAGE to view your hotel bid responses.

Reviewing Hotel Group Bid Responses:
16. On the portal's HOME PAGE, click "Groups Sign In", located on the top right side of the screen.
17. Input your email address and your password and click "Sign In".
18. You will see a list of all of the group requests you've submitted. Click "View Request" on the left side, of the group request you'd like to review.
19. You are now able to review your group specs at the top of the page, the hotel bid responses in the middle of the page and the hotels that do not have availability for your dates or cannot accommodate your maximum rate, at the bottom of the page.
20. Directly below your group specs, you will see an Advance Filters box, which provides filter options. Below the Advance Filters box, you may elect to view hotel options in a list view, a map view or a grid view. You may download the grid view into an excel spreadsheet by clicking "Download in Spreadsheet, at the top right side of the grid view screen. Below the view option boxes, you will see tabs that allow you to sort hotels by distance to a popular landmark or attraction, a specific address, price, etc.
21. As you review the hotel bid responses, you may click on the hotel's name to view hotel provided information and photos, a map of the hotel's location, nearby attractions, Trip Advisor comments and hotel amenities.
22. If you would like to receive a bid response from a particular hotel that has not responded with a bid offer AND has not responded as "not available", **please send me an email.**

23. In the "List View" option, click "Decline" for each hotel that is not a viable option. When the decline page displays, you may advise the hotel that you would reconsider a lower rate. At the bottom, be sure to "check" the box "**I'd like to receive an adjusted new offer from this hotel".**

24. Once you have narrowed your list of hotels for consideration, you can reveal your identity and retrieve the hotel person's contact information, as hotels generally have several sales people. Just click "Contact Hotel", located in the column to the left, for each hotel under consideration. Next to the "My Status" box, select the drop down that says "I still have questions" or "I am ready to reserve now", whichever is appropriate. Inside the "Group Name" box input your group's name. Then click "Send to the Hotel Contact that placed this bid". Call the sales manager, and let them know that you are responding to a bid they placed through HOTELPLANNER. They may ask you for the lead number. You will find this 7-digit number, at the top of your group's specs. The hotels will be happy to address your concerns and move forward to secure rooms on a definite basis. PLEASE NOTE: Using this portal for a group booking does not exclude you from following your agency's purchasing rules and regulations. Do not enter into a contract without following your agency's purchasing procedures.

Creating a GROUP PAGE When Hosting a Meeting/Conference

25. Utilizing the GROUP PAGE allows you to control the attendees that attend your meeting. This is especially helpful, if you plan to pay for all attendees on a master hotel account. Using this tool allows you to view and approve all guests, before they are able to make a hotel reservation.

26. Once you have clicked "Contact Hotel" (described in #24 above) and secured your rooms on a definite basis, ask the hotel to log into their HotelPlanner account. Click on their "Summary" page. Click on the lead number that corresponds to your group. Then click on the blue "Update Status to Booked" link to change your group to a definite status. You will not be able to engage your GROUP PAGE until this task has been completed, by the hotel.

27. You are now ready to click on the red "My Group Page" icon, to the left of your chosen hotel.

28. A new page will appear. Notice Option 2, which provides the web link that you can share with your meeting/conference attendees. Scroll down to see what attendees will see, when viewing your page.

29. You may click the "General" tab to make changes.

30. Click the "Hotels Tab" to adjust hotel information, such as the "Cut-Off Date".

31. Click the "Rooming List" tab and change the top drop-down box to "Just give my attendees call-in instructions upon registering".

32. You have the option to click the "Design" tab, if you'd like to change your page's design.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE: Most hotels **REQUIRE** a valid card presented at check-in, as a guarantee against incidentals. To "hold" a card against incidentals means, **the hotel will "freeze" a certain amount of money and make those funds unavailable for your use.** If the traveler uses a credit card, their available credit limit will be reduced by the amount the hotel freezes. If the traveler uses a debit card, the available funds in their checking account will be "frozen" until the funds are released, which can take up to 17 days. The traveler should only use a debit card, if there are enough funds in the checking account to cover the hotel's hold, plus any other transactions the traveler intends to process. Otherwise, it can result in the traveler being extremely inconvenienced and possibly incur a loss of funds, from overdraft fees.

Safe travels!