

Hosting a MOGSouth Event

MOGSouth, the 'Morgan Owners Group - South' is a group of Morgan car owners mainly from the Southeastern United States and East Coast. The organization formally came into being in 1975 with the first MOGSouth Meet in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in 1976. MOGSouth celebrated its 40th anniversary at a meet in Aiken, South Carolina in 2015. In 2007 the MOGSouth club expanded when the Morgan Owners Group of Florida, GatorMOG, joined MOGSouth as a 'Chapter'. MOGSouth further reorganized in 2023 with the decentralization of the Club's very large geographic area into three regions. The intent of this decentralization or reorganization is to rework the Club to better address the needs of the membership, and make the Club's operation easier and in some ways more manageable. The Western Region (Alabama / Georgia as well as a few outliers), the Eastern Region (Primarily South Carolina and North Carolina as well as a few outliers) and the Southern Region (Florida (basically what was previously GatorMOG.) Each region has a separate Lead member who helps facilitate the MOGSouth activities in their respective regions.

MOGSouth is a very loose organization without a formal management structure. This is to say that volunteers are responsible for making everything happen. With the introduction of the MOGSouth Regions, meets are more frequent and local to the membership within the regions. The lead is assisted, as is the MOGSouth tradition, with volunteer 'hosts.'

MOGSouth was founded on this principle of 'hosting'. The Founders did not want a bunch of bylaws and rules and regulations; nor did they not want officers or other yearly responsibilities.

Past meets and parties have been held at (or near) member's houses as well as in hotels or bed and breakfast establishments. In many cases the club's size precluded using folks homes however the decentralized regional concept should help us get back to the more personal methods of hosting meets and events.

GatorMOG doesn't host meets, per se, but it does have a few '**Noggins**' of it's own during the year. These are usually specific to Florida Morgan Owners, held in Florida locales, but really anyone is welcome.

Each one of the MOGSouth regional events typically needs a volunteer to host. Someone to plan and make all the arrangements (with help of course.) This document is intended to provide any MOGSouth member with some idea of what is involved in hosting an event and provide some answers to common questions related to planning the thing. It tries to encapsulate a number of 'lessons learned' and 'best practices' to ease the burden of volunteering as an event host. Please keep in mind that these 'lessons learned' and 'best practices' may or may not work for you and your particular situation. They are generic in nature so use your best judgement when making decisions about your specific event.

Planning an event will typically require identification of a **location** for the event, determining the **timing** or when the event will be held and **planning out the meals and activities** that will occur over the course of the event. If an overnight event is anticipated, some sort of **lodging** will be necessary and it is usually left up to the volunteer host to select a hotel, B&B or the like and if appropriate, negotiate a group rate at some lodging establishment.

→ **When in doubt, talk with someone else.** There are any number of folks within MOGSouth and GatorMOG experienced at planning these sorts of events. I know they will be more than happy to help you.

Location

The location is dependent on the volunteers who decide to host the event. **Any locale within the region is viable.**

Consideration must be given to the location's past history as a site for events. Philosophically, we don't want to go to the same location time and time again. The reason is simple, folks will choose not to participate as they have 'been there, done that.' A location that hasn't been used for a meet in some time will appeal to a greater crowd.

These more 'remote' locations should be considered out of the norm and only used on a infrequent basis. They shouldn't be totally discarded however. We try to have meet locations that are convenient to all our members. This is one of the main goals of the decentralized regional concept - Meets that are closer to home.

Timing

Like the location of the event, the timing of the event is also up to the volunteers who decide to host the event. Selecting the timing of any event is always a challenge and we try very hard to deconflict the event with other things on the Calendar. Timing is also dependent on availability of affordable lodging, appropriate weather, other significant events at the desired location, etc. The best reference is the posted MOGSouth web site calendar. Look on the calendar to see what events are already scheduled and try to find dates that won't interfere.

The Calendar is very dense and it really is impossible to de-conflict all the events with every other event. So don't get overly concerned. There will be always be conflicts and they cannot be avoided.

The MOGSouth Holiday Party may be a consolidated (all regions) or may be separate events. This should be identified by the MOGSouth and Regional Leads early on in the yearly planning process. The traditional date for the Holiday Party is the 1st Saturday of December.

Lodging

When looking for a hotel or lodging for the group, estimate the number of couples expected to participate. We typically expected around 20 couples for the past MOGSouth meets. So now with the smaller regions, it will be something less. Perhaps 7 – 10 couples, but it is best to look at each event individually, estimating the attendance, given the location, dates, weather, etc. If appropriate, getting a hotel to block a number of rooms for a set period of time leading up to the event is appropriate.

Participation levels depends on any number of things. Certainly the location of the event, the activities of the event, the timing of the event, the costs, etc. The more unique and special the event, the greater the participation is likely to be. If you think you'll get more participation, ask to block more rooms. Or, if certain activities necessitate a more precise headcount, ask for an RSVP.

Locate a hotel that is convenient to the event and is reasonably priced (prices will vary due to the location of the event, the location of the hotel, economic inflation over time, etc.) Anything too cheap (~\$75 a night) will likely be insufficient for the MOGSouth / GatorMOG crowd, but anything too expensive may keep some attendees from coming. A room rate around ~\$200 (As of Jun 2023) a night is appropriate (before taxes and applicable resort fee.) Given our location, with all the tourist sites, we do run into 'high season' room rates. This higher lodging cost needs to be taken into consideration when determining the overall timing and duration of the event. Sometimes it just can't be helped. But keep in mind, the higher the costs, the likelihood of lower attendance.

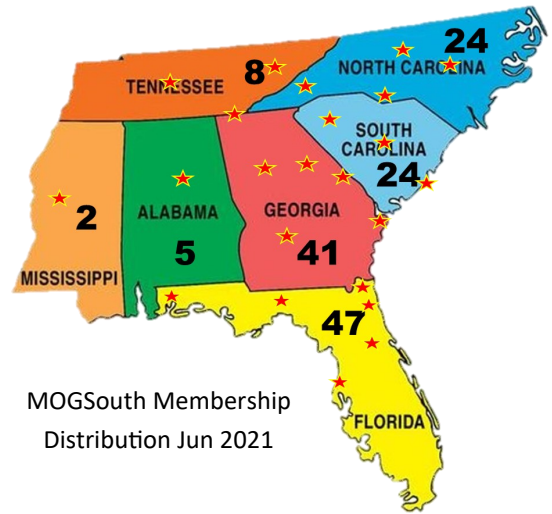
Many hotels are likely to give a group a lower room rate (or other amenities) to entice the group due to stay at their specific hotel. They want the business!! Simply get the hotel to commit to holding a block of rooms for the Morgan group at an appropriate group room rate and then we will communicate to the membership, via email or the web site, the selected hotel, the rate and ask the membership to make their own reservations (and pay) for their own rooms.

→ The host need not provide the hotel with any financial commitment to hold the rooms for the group. Don't pay them or sign anything that financially commits you or the club to the hotel.

Hotels typically will hold a block of rooms for some period of time without any financial agreements. If the rooms are not reserved by members of the group within the allotted time frame, the hotel will release the rooms and sell them to whomever they can.

One of the best ways to determine who is coming to your event is to ask the hotel for a listing of who has reserved rooms. You will want to ask for that report every week or so to see how the attendee list is growing. Usually they will give you names, sometimes just numbers but that will help you plan knowing the general size of the group.

Hotels that provide free breakfast seem to more appealing and convenient than those that require we all go somewhere else for breakfast (unless Breakfast is a part of the event's itinerary.) Organizing the group to go out to a breakfast spot is usually painful.



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It is also recommended that the hotel or lodging location have its own bar and/or restaurant, unless it is adjacent to other bars and/or restaurants. (Someplace that is in walking distance, e.g. across the parking lot?) We want to be sure we don't have folks out on the roads, in their Morgans, in unfamiliar places, at night. And, we certainly don't want any drinking and driving.

→ It is best to just assume folks will want to drink, so find a hotel with a bar or with one that is within walking distance.

Hotels with secure, enclosed parking are preferred to ones with open parking on a busy street. But, I have never heard of a problem with a Morgan so don't sweat a less than optimum parking arrangement. Consider trailer parking if necessary. Folks may not want to drive to the event location. M3W specific events or events with car shows will generate a need for more trailers.

MOGSouth has in had gathering places, **the Hospitality Room**, in the past and open to the attendees during the event. This room is typically a location within the meet hotel that folks can gather, catch up or chat about things, and partake of the MOGSouth provided beer, wine, chips, nuts, etc. This habit may or may not be appropriate for a given Regional event.

We have, in the past, asked the Hotel to provide us with a spot for this Hospitality Room gratis, e.g. free of charge. We rarely will pay the hotel for this extra meeting room or gathering spot. If the space is not available or the club is precluded from bringing it's own beer, wine, etc. due to local laws, etc., the hotel's bar can be used as the gathering location.

Again, the hotel sees this as an enticement and uses it to capture our business. If one hotel is reluctant to provide us a room, tell them that their competitor is offering this to us, and question why they cannot.

In any situation, in order for us to **bring in our own beer and wine, the hotel has to allow outside food and alcohol** to be consumed in the hotel. There are sometimes legalities that preclude this. This is rare however.

→ **Stay out of the money loop!** We don't want you to ever have to commit your own funds or those of the Club during the planning of any event. If you think a financial commitment is necessary, check with Club leadership before any decisions are made.

Make sure you will be reimbursed by the attendees or the club for any money you spend 'out of pocket.' Incidental expenses can usually be accommodated, but it's best to ask first. MOGSouth (or the Region) may also pay for other expenses, such as transportation, bar tenders, etc. Just make sure you have concurrence that the expense can be paid by the Club (or the Region). MOGSouth is not in the money making business and the Club finances are meant to go back into the Club events. So, don't be afraid to ask about expenses, MOGSouth will likely reimburse you. We don't want you to have to pay 'out of your pocket' for anything. This is where your membership dues goes!

→ **Never fear! You will recoup any money you spend!**

There are instances that we choose a hotel that doesn't fully meet our needs in this area. We have had instances where the hotel doesn't allow outside food and alcohol due to local laws or regulations. In this case the hotel's integral bar became our meeting spot. On one occasion there was no room inside that would work, so we took over an outside patio with seating and a fire pit. Another option is to get a suite or other large hotel room and turn the 'living room' half into the 'Hospitality Room'. All of these are viable options and should be considered, if necessary.

Dining

Dining can be challenge depending on the size of the group. The smaller numbers of members in each of the regions should help.

Breakfasts

Breakfasts are best if they are provided by the hotel and if at all possible, free of charge (e.g. included with the hotel room rates.) If the hotel has a kitchen and restaurant that serves breakfast, and charges those dining, that is fine as well.

Lunch

Lunch is usually out and about somewhere and at times a reservation or arrangements with a restaurant will be necessary. Box lunches and BBQs have also worked in the past. So they may also be viable. It is also recommended that a lunch spot be selected that can address the size of the crowd and allow each of the attendees to select their own meals from the restaurant's menu and pay individually for what they eat/drink. Again, this keeps you out of the money loop.

It is recommended that you find a large enough location, perhaps a 'sports bar,' that has a pretty extensive menu. That way every one is likely to find something they like. If the restaurant is too specific, problems might arise. For example, you identify a 'seafood only restaurant' as the place to go, some folks may not be happy. They may not like seafood, or have allergies to seafood, etc. This applies to dinners as well. Also, there are folks with dietary restrictions (salt free, Gluten free or Vegan, etc.) that should not be discounted without consideration. It is best to select a restaurant that is prepared for these sorts of restrictions.

Dinner

Usually on the day of arrival, (if a multi day event) since folks will all arrive at different times, dinner will be informal. Perhaps just some local restaurants serving dinner (either at the hotel or in the vicinity) can be recommended. No collective group dinner need be arranged. The host might have recommendations as to where folks might go to eat. Folks can figure out where they want to go, who they want to go with, and when. (This assumes folks are generally arriving in the evening before dinner. If they are arriving earlier in the day, some consideration for lunch or dinner may be necessary.)

Usually there is a more formal group meal on Saturday or the last evening of the event. This meal is at a restaurant selected by the host and a time for the meal is worked into the day's itinerary. The time and number of folks anticipated is negotiated ahead of time with the restaurant manager. It is usually problematic just to show up with a large number of folks, without any prior discussion, and hope to get fed quickly. The smaller number of members in the regions should help with this.

It is also recommended that each of the attendees select their own meals from the restaurant's menu and pay individually for what they eat/drink. Again, this keeps you out of the money loop. Sometimes the restaurant will want to limit the menu for larger groups or offer a meal at some fixed price. This can work but it is best to stay clear, if at all possible. It is usually too difficult to try to select a menu that everyone will like, one that addresses everyone's unique medical dietary requirements and meets every one's individual budget, etc. It is best to let them pick from the menu and pay individually. It is also a pain to try to identify what each attendee will eat and maintain a headcount for the restaurant. If this is a requirement, it might be best to look elsewhere!

Activities

The bulk of the event's **activities** will occur on Saturday. This is typically where the imagination of the host comes in. The event activities are also what draws the participants to the specific event. Typically the planned activities involve the cars in some way. (We are a car club of course.) They most certainly involve some of those things that are special about the location of the event. It is the volunteer host that is most knowledgeable of the location and is best to decide what is appropriate for the club and what isn't. Sifting through all the opportunities is usually the biggest challenge. Use your best judgement and select a collection of things that can be accomplished within the allotted time frame, and try to chose **activities** that will appeal to both sexes. A day of rummaging through auto parts may be appealing to some, but not all. If both sexes are not addressed, we risk losing some folks.

A meet's **activities** can start as early as necessary. However be cognizant that some folks use these events as vacations and don't want to get up at the crack of dawn or drive all day. We have had drives just for the sake of driving and drives to get us to other places, e.g. museums, etc. Both are acceptable however, but do be considerate of drive durations

Some cars are not all that well maintained and folks need a bathroom break every now and again. When selecting routes it is best to avoid the high speed motorways. Some folks aren't comfortable on the highways nor do they really enjoy high speed driving. Keep in mind the Plus 8s and Roadsters need to play nicely with the older 4/4s and Plus 4s.

The MOGSouth Holiday Party

Most of the information about Lodging / Dining / Hospitality Rooms, as provided for a basic Fall or Spring Meet, apply to the Holiday Party, but not all. The number of rooms typically blocked is higher than for a normal meet. The Holiday Party is always the first **Saturday** of December.

The location of the Holiday Party (Consolidated or Regional), to some degree, dictates the need for **Morgan specific parking**. If in the mountains of North Carolina with the potential for snow, most folks will likely arrive in their tin tops. If the Holiday Party is further south, or if more moderate weather is anticipated, more Morgans are likely.

Folks will typically drive to the host hotel / location of the party on Friday, arriving in the afternoon. Saturday is usually a low key sort of day. Activities are less structured and have included viewing the local holiday parade, shopping in the local town's antique

shops and/or boutiques, viewing art galleries, touring historic sites, visiting an motorcycle museum, etc. It just sort of depends on what might be available at the chosen location and on the 1st Saturday of December. Folks will clean up for the Holiday Banquet Dinner and tend to want a cash bar available to get a beer or glass of wine before heading over to the dinner.

A **Cash Bar**, open for an hour or so prior to dinner, is appropriate at the Dinner / Banquet location. Most folks will want a cocktail prior to dinner. If a dedicated Cash Bar is not available or appropriate, the folks can gather in the hotel's bar prior to the dinner. It is nice to have some sort of bar available during dinner, as well. Sometimes it just makes more sense to use the Hotel's fixed bar.

The Holiday Party typically has a more **formal buffet or banquet dinner**. This can be catered, provided by the Lodging Hotel or provided in any other way that makes sense. In the past, MOGSouth had its Holiday Parties at members homes, with attending members bringing a favorite covered dish or some such, but the Club just got too big to continue this practice. Perhaps the smaller membership in the various regions will allow us to once again adopt this practice. Now the Holiday Parties attract a good crowd and it is estimated that for a MOGSouth consolidated (all Regions) Party we will likely have 65 - 70 folks for dinner. The headcount for a regional party should be 25 or less. The prices for dinner have to be appropriate. You don't want to go too cheap or the dinner will be suspect, or go too expensive and drive some folks away.

The Holiday Party typically includes a few minutes of MOGSouth or regional business.

Communication to the Membership

It is best to accomplish much of the event planning early. Locking in the location, dates and lodging well ahead of time is a good thing. This allows folks to block out those dates on their individual calendars, de-conflict any personal schedules, etc. Notifying folks at the last minute, risks a loss of participation. It is good to communicate a general itinerary early to entice folks to participate.

Once the **location** and **dates** are communicated, the lodging arrangements must be distributed to the membership so that they can make their hotel reservations, if appropriate. Folks need to know **what hotel** to call, at **what phone number** or if a **internet link** is provided, they need to know the URL. They also need to know the **name of the Group** under which the discounted rooms are being held. After these details have been communicated a more detailed itinerary should be distributed.

Final Thoughts

One of the most significant things about MOGSouth, something that differentiates us from other clubs, is the loose management style and our bent towards the **'volunteer'**. The **volunteer** is paramount to MOGSouth's future success. Perhaps we are all simply individualists and don't like to be dictated to. We don't need some elected official to tell us what to do. This sort of structure breeds expectations and results in politics and cliques. Things we definitely don't need.

We all have our own ideas about how things should be run, so the **volunteer** concept is the perfect tenet for us to embrace.

We, here in MOGSouth, have a tremendously rich region of scenic roads, special sites, historic artifacts, interesting places, etc. I doubt we will ever see everything worth seeing in the MOGSouth / GatorMOG region. Hell, most of us don't even know where all of the good stuff is! However, it is the local folks, that are knee deep in these areas, that know each of these areas best and are certainly the most qualified to show the club all these wonders. Just **volunteer** to host the club in your area and we will come.

In the past the club has relied on a number of long-term members to host events time and time again. It isn't really fair to them nor is it in the best interest of the club to always go to the same people. (I know some of you have volunteered to host the club a few too many times.) We need new places to go and different things to do.

There are lots of new MOGSouth / GatorMOG members that have yet to get involved. Don't think that inexperience is a good reason to remain quiet. We need and want new ideas and new ways of doing things. And, there are no judgements made or measurements used to gage success. Getting involved will certainly allow you to meet some more folks in the club and this can only be a good thing. And the only way to get rid of those thoughts of inexperience is to 'do it' and gain the experience. Come to think of it there really are no downsides to volunteering. → **It's all good, so raise your hand!**