

1. BRING CASH

And more than you think you'll need. Attending a comic convention is like being a kid in a candy store...so many goodies to entice the senses. So much to do, so much to buy...and things can wind up costing more than you expect. While some vendors take credit cards, many require cash, so make sure you take plenty. If you run out be prepared to stand in long ATM lines along with the many others who shared your mistake. You can always take it home if you don't spend it..lol...but you'll spend it.

2. THINK COMFORT

Lines, lines and more lines ...depending on the size of the convention, expect to spend hours walking, standing or sitting A LOT!! Comfortable shoes and attire is RECOMMENDED. A convention weekend is NOT the time to be wearing a new outfit for the first time. You don't want to be sitting in a room for four or five hours being barely able to breathe, fearing something might fall off or out, or standing in an autograph line for four or five hours with shoes that haven't been broken in yet; your feet will thank you.

3. ARRIVE EARLY & STRATEGIZE

While waiting in line to get in be sure to pick up a program guide and use it to map out your day (this can be your single best preparation tool). Identify the events you'd like to attend, such as signings, movie panels, etc. Get there early and stake out a place in line or you could find yourself out of a seat. Good seats are a commodity so be prepared for long lines and lots of waiting (especially at the SDCC!). Once you're inside the hall, be prepared to stay in...once attendance starts to max out if you leave the hall you may not be able to get back in. You may also want to consider a light sweatshirt or sweater, even in the middle of summer, as the panel rooms can at times feel like an ice box.

4. SLEEP!

Believe it or not, your body needs sleep, whether you like the idea or not. It's just that simple. Going all night for multiple nights on end will take its toll. It sounds fun but you'll pay big time in the end (especially if work waits for you just on the other side). Yes, it's a comic convention but it should also be a mini vacation!

5. SHOWER! (SERIOUSLY!)

This means soap 'n' water, deodorant every day and a daily set of clean clothes (at least a fresh t-shirt - (c'mon, they give them away!). Convention halls are frequently very crowded. Being pressed into confined quarters behind people who thought they could get away without bathing for yet another day is an unpleasant experience (at best). If 1 out of 5 con-goers instead of 1 out of 10 exercised good hygiene the overall con the experience would be much more pleasant.

6. EAT!

Seems a simple concept, but is easily overlooked. On the go all weekend long, burning up every last calorie...At the very least start with a solid breakfast every day. Snacks and beverages are a great alternative that can be placed in a back pack to get you through until dinner or major meals. If you prefer, you can eat at the con but food prices are comparable to movie theaters and sporting events (with taste and selection being optional).

7. BADGES? WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' BADGES!

Seriously, No Badge = No Entrance. Your badge is your proof that you paid to get into the convention. Also, most convention exclusives will require a mark on your badge to limit quantities to one per person. Keep it visible but don't lose it.

8. BRING A LIST

Avoid sensory overload. With all the booths of comics, toys, and goodies it's easy to forget what items you needed to fill in your collection. Even Santa uses a list, so make a list and check it twice even if you think you know precisely what you need.

9. SHIPPING ALTERNATIVES

It can be challenging getting all your new acquisitions home safely. If packing your suitcases or car is not an option, consider shipping all your goodies to yourself instead. If you're leaving on Sunday when UPS, FedEx, DHL or the post office is closed try your hotel. Some hotels are good at providing this service for their guests. It wouldn't hurt to verify this with your hotel before the trip. If shipping is absolutely a no-go, bring an extra suitcase or duffle bag and make it your carry on (the airport baggage handlers can be brutal on bags that get checked but be considerate that it is not an oversized carry-on).

10. KODAK MOMENT?

Bring your camera. Also consider extra film, batteries, or flash/memory cards. Keep your eyes open 'cause you never know who you'll run into (I've gotten some great candid shots of stars caught wandering the con floor!). There's a photographer in all of us....so have fun and click away.

11. SKETCH MATERIALS

One of the primary perks of attending a con is the opportunity to get sketches or commissions from your favorite artists (in my opinion). A sketchbook (or two) is a great solution and serves as a central place to have your sketches done. One with high quality bright white bristol paper and perforations to allow for clean removal of pages is the way to go. For larger sketches or commissions use of 11x14 comic artboard is the ticket. Having multiple sketchbooks allows you the freedom to leave a sketchbook with someone without having to sacrifice your ability to get more sketches.

12. KEEPING THINGS SAFE

Art Portfolios and poster tubes really can come in handy to keep your new posters and prints in great shape. But don't forget about your comics, so take some extra bags & boards. Even bringing a few rubber bands can also be useful - you never know when you'll need one. I started with a telescoping poster tube with shoulder strap but have found the 13x19 hard sided portfolios are the way to go! It's a great place to store Original Art and prints. Remember the hall is a crowded place so protect your new OA and keep an eye on your items...if you don't they could just disappear! No joke, portfolios have been known to walk off, even from industry professionals.

13. CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Cell phones are a great way to keep in touch with friends when attending cons. It sure beats searching the hall for hours on end. It's also a great tool when coordinating your next stop or event.

14. TRANSPORTATION

Your method of transportation, whether it's a car or public transportation, may require additional planning. If you're driving consider your parking options. Close parking is a HOT commodity and fills up fast, so get there early. If you opt for using public transportation, be aware of the various kinds (bus, trolley, taxis) and their hours of operation.

15. KEEPING ENTERTAINED

MP3 players, hand held game consoles and a deck of cards can help pass the time or serve as a distraction from your surroundings while waiting in those long lines.

16. BE COURTEOUS!

Cons are a packed place, and the fans and pros deserve a good time, just like you. So bring your smile, some patience, and a great attitude - all these things will go a really long way to making the convention better for everyone. Remember this is a hobby and hobbies should be fun!!!

That's all I can think of for now. These tips are a start to get you on your way to a memorable con.