

## Events: What to Take, What to Do

### What is an Event?

An event is a day-long (or sometimes multi-day) SCA activity. Events, which are hosted by local groups, may have a general theme such as “Market Day in the Middle Ages” or a specific theme such as “A 10<sup>th</sup> Century Viking Raid”. Some events may have a particular focus to them, such as R.U.S.H. Sessions that are composed of classes or Regional Fighter Practices that are composed of training in combat. Yet other events will have special activities attached to them, such as Crown Tourney or Coronation. No matter what the theme, focus or type of activity involved, all are welcome to attend and participate. **Note:** No one is restricted from an event based on the time-period, culture or other aspect of their persona. You’ll see folks with 15<sup>th</sup> century Russian personas at early period Norse themed events; Roman-age fighters at 14<sup>th</sup> century Pas d’Armes, etc.

There are however two main factors to consider when preparing to attend an SCA event:

- 1) What type of event is it?  
(This determines what you need to pack and take along with you.)
- 2) Are you visiting another SCA group or is your home group hosting the event?  
(If your home group is hosting, then you have some additional responsibilities as a member of the hosting group.)

### Types of SCA Events & What to Pack

There are two factors that determine what an event type is. These are length of the event and the kind of location the event is held at. Most events are either one day in length or take place over a weekend. A few events, usually known as Wars, take place over 1 to 2 weeks. Depending on the activities of the event, the kind of location it is held at can involve being exclusively indoors, exclusively outdoors or a combination of both. Many times the outdoor events allow camping to be done by those attending.

Items to make sure you have for a typical indoor event include:

1. Garb. To attend an event, it is required that members/visitors attire themselves in some attempt at a costume suitable to pre-17th century. It is recommended that as most medieval clothes lack pockets, you include in your garb a pouch of some sort and a belt on which to wear it. Or consider using a basket as a carryall for your wallet, keys, etc.
2. Drinking Vessel. A goblet, chalice or mug made of ceramic, metal, wood or leather. It allows you to refresh yourself with beverages without having to display modern cans, plastic bottles or styrofoam cups.
3. Feast Gear. If you plan on eating lunch on site at the event and/or attend a feast to be held, then you’ll need feast gear. At a minimum, this should include a plate and a spoon. It is recommended that you also include a bowl, a knife, a fork, a napkin and a plastic bag to take dirty dishes home in (not all sites provide rinse or wash facilities). Additional “extras” could include tablecloth, salt & pepper shakers, candle holder and candles, matches/lighter and a cork screw/bottle opener. A large sturdy wicker basket, wooden box or canvas tote bag is extremely useful for storing and carrying your feast gear.
4. Directions & Event Info. Nothing is worse than getting on the way to an event and discovering you don’t have the directions to find the location of the event. Directions and other event information can be found on the event flyer, These are usually available online at SCA websites and in the local or kingdom SCA publications. All official events will have directions in the kingdom newsletter.
5. Projects. Any SCA/medieval project you are working on and that is easily transportable is a good thing to take along. It allows you to show your work to others, lets you share your interest and may help you locate others with a similar interest. If such activities are scheduled for this event, this area would also include armor and weapons if you’re into combat, archery equipment for archers, etc.
6. Preparedness & Repair Kit. A pouch or box with small items that might become useful or needful is highly recommended. Items to include in this kit include: paper, pen & pencil, notecards, paperclips, duct tape, safety pins, straight pins, needle & thread, scissors, small pair of pliers, sun screen, lip balm, insect repellent, aspirin, antacids, band-aids, tissues, scotch tape, twist-ties, small plastic baggies, small snacks (bags of peanuts, jerky, etc.) and spare car key.
7. Additional Items. While these are not necessities, these items can help enhance your SCA event experience: heraldic banner (and other display items), medieval games to play with others and camera & film.

Items to make sure you have for a typical outdoor event include:

1. Everything listed for an indoor event.
2. Head Covering. Bring along a medieval looking hat, cap, scarf, veil or something to keep the sun off your head. .
3. Sturdy Footwear. It is suggested that you invest in a good pair of boots or a pair of sandals with an ankle strap. Whatever type of shoe you wear, make sure there is good arch support in them. You’ll be thankful for that with the amount of walking you do at an average camping event.
4. Chair. Someplace to sit and rest your feet and legs is a good thing to have. If you bring along a large cloth (bedsheet or blanket) to throw over it, even a modern folding chair will work well for you.
5. Cloak. A cloak, robe, wrap or cover of some sort is highly recommended. Even when the weather is predicted to be clear and pleasant, evenings can be cool and rain storms can pop up unexpectedly.
6. Drinking Water. Most sites do have water available, but some are extremely primitive. Thus it is often best to bring a supply of water.
7. Shade Fly. A small portable sun shade to set up to make sure you can get out of the elements for a time is always nice to have along.

If the outdoor event is also a camping event, other items to bring include:

1. **Camping Gear.** At a minimum this should be a tent and bedding. Recommended is also ground-cover tarps and a bed (air mattress & pump, rope & frame, etc.). Perhaps a bench or box in which to store items that can also be sat upon. Also think about using strips of cloth or other means to mark guide-ropes your tent might have, so folks do not trip on them in the dark.
2. **Lights.** Whether you wish to go with flashlights (highly recommended with tents) or lanterns, you will need something to light your way around the site, the path to the bathroom and to see inside your tent after dark.
3. **Emergency First-Aid Kit.** This should be an automatic part of anyone's supplies for a camping event. Additional items to add to the standard kit are: antibacterial hand wash, moist baby wipes, spare tissues, insect repellent and sunscreen.
4. **Shower Supplies.** Most camping sites used by the SCA have shower facilities available; however you will need to bring your own toiletries: towels, wash-cloths, soap, shampoo, etc.
5. **Toilet paper.** Although toilet paper is usually provided in the facilities, it's never a bad idea to bring along a roll of your own.

**Note:** At many camping sites, the facilities are shared by lords and ladies alike. Thus courtesy should ALWAYS be practiced. Before entering showers or restrooms, one should knock on closed doors and ask, "Is anyone within?"

### **Food at Camping Events**

Most camping events do not provide a feast. As you will be responsible for your own meals, snacks and drink, you will need to find out what options are available to you prior to going to the event. On rare occasions an event will have a food merchant in attendance that will have a lunch tavern which offers edibles for a nominal fee. If such is going to be at the event, it should be noted on the Event Flyer. Another option may be to simply drive to a nearby eatery, if one is in the area. If you are unfamiliar with the area the event is going to be held at, contact the Event Steward listed on the event flyer and ask for information on nearby places to eat. The other option, considered the best by many experienced SCA folks, is to bring your own food and drink.

Some folks will choose to cook, using a propane stove, a BBQ grill or a campfire, depending on what is permitted at the site. Others will elect not to cook at the event, but consume items that do not need to be cooked or that have been prepared ahead of time. Thus, if you are going to be bringing your own food, you will need to pack any cooking gear you need (stove, grill, pots, pans, skillets, utensils) and a cooler with ice to store food in. If you're not planning to cook, take food that keeps well with minimal refrigeration (in your ice chest). If you are taking any sort of canned food, don't forget to pack a can opener! Also take along zip-lock storage bags to seal leftovers in.

Examples of foods that take minimal refrigeration or heating up, that can work well for camping events include: flat breads (pita or soft tortilla shells), small buns, prepared meats (sandwich slices, etc.), cheese, smoked meats, crackers, rice cakes, apples, oranges, pears, bananas, carrots, dried meats (jerky, dried fish), pre-cooked rice/beans, "dippable" foods (hummus, bean dip), peanut butter, frozen pre-cooked chili/stew/soup, pickled foods, hardboiled eggs, cookies, dried fruits, nuts, granola-type cereals, "energy bars", bottled juice, bottled pop, chips, instant coffee or tea, instant dried soup mixes, and canned pastas.

### **Traveling to Events**

When you first start traveling to SCA events, most likely you will be driving to an area that you've never been to before. Unless you're riding with someone who has been to the site before, or following them in your vehicle, make sure you have a good map of the area and some detailed instructions on how to find the site. Check the event flyer for directions. Near the event location, there should be several SCA signs at the turn-off areas indicating the direction to the site.

If you don't have your own transportation to an event, ask at a local meeting if anyone has space available in their vehicle. If folks have room, they are usually willing to take along additional passengers. However, when you are an extra rider with someone, you should remember that you are receiving a favor and be a polite guest. Some good guidelines include:

1. **Remember you are on your driver's schedule.** Find out the details of their trip itinerary when first arranging for the ride. Many times the driver has meetings or other duties involved with the event. You should not cause any delays for them. Be prepared and on time. If you have any special time constraints on you concerning the event, let the driver know this when you're making arrangements.
2. **Realize that space may be limited.** A driver has first priority on the space in his vehicle. If you need a good bit of space due to items you need to take with you, let the driver know this when discussing preparations.
3. **Offer to chip in on gas money.** Remember that travel is putting wear and tear on the driver's vehicle. It's only fair and honorable to share in the gas costs. Sometimes the driver will decline to accept the money, but you should still make the offer.
4. **Offer to share driving duties** (if you drive). Many times this offer will be declined, either because the car owner is reluctant to have others drive their vehicle or due to insurance reasons. But it's still polite to offer.
5. **Try to limit requests for rest stops.** If you have physical needs that require a lot of restroom stops, due to medicine, etc...let your driver know this in advance, so that time can be figured into the travel plans.
6. **If staying overnight, plan to stay where or near where your driver does.** Again a bit of pre-planning is required...but it's unfair to expect your driver to have to pick you up and drop you off at locations far away from where he is staying.
7. **Remember that the driver is not your chauffeur.** It's not your driver's job to run you to places off-site once you are at an event. If there are stores or other places you want to visit, you may ask your driver about the possibility of him taking you...but remember that he may have obligations that prevent it, or simply not wish to make such trips.
8. **If you travel off-site with someone else, let your driver know...**and be sure to be back on time to leave. And remember that it is not your driver's responsibility to pack and load your gear. Be sure to be back in time to prepare to leave on time.

## Staying Overnight at Non-Camping Events

Because of the distance involved, sometimes when traveling to an event, you may be required to make arrangements for staying somewhere overnight. If you are traveling with others, make sure you know what their arrangements entail in advance. The two most common sets of arrangements are:

1. Staying at a hotel/motel. Usually at the one that is as close to the event site as possible. This arrangement is usually the most easy and convenient means of finding a place to stay and allows for greater privacy.
2. Obtaining crash space. This involves staying at the home of SCA members local to the event and most of the time means just having floor space made available for you. If this is the case, then you will need to take along a sleeping bag, pillows and bedding (and possibly towels, washcloths) and toiletries. On occasion someone will have an extra bed or a couch that can be used, but don't expect it...ask the person you'll be "crashing" with in advance about details such as what amenities are available, if they have pets, if smoking is allowed, etc. This can be especially important if you have allergies. Also realize that you are being offered free space to stay, but you are still responsible for your own meals and snacks. Folks are quite willing to provide space, as that costs them nothing, but their budgets may not be able to extend to providing food. Finally, when crashing at someone's home, it isn't necessary to bring a gift for those providing you space, but do remember to say thanks to them when first arriving and when leaving,

## Arriving at an Event

Once you arrive at the event, the first thing to do is check in. The area for this is known as the Troll Booth. (Some kingdoms use the term Gate or Postern.) Here you will sign in on an "attendance form". The specific form you sign will depend on whether you are a national member or not, whether you signed a waiver form with your membership or not, etc. There will be gentles working at the check-in point to assist you with what forms to sign. You will need to then pay a site fee, if there is one for the event. Most events do have a site fee (which the local group uses to pay for renting the site, etc). If you are not a national member there is also a small non-member surcharge that is required by SCA, Inc. Additionally, if there is a feast at the event and you wish to partake of it, there will be a feast fee.

In addition to getting you checked in and paid up for everything, the Troll Booth attendance can provide you with information about where to unload, where to set up, where to park and inform you when activities will occur and where on site. They should also be able to inform you of any close by gas stations, eating establishments, etc.

After checking in, unload your gear and get set-up. Once this is done you're ready to start enjoying the event. But one thing that is suggested before you begin your frolicsome activities is to take a look to see if there are others who can use a hand in getting their items unloaded and set up. This not only is providing assistance to others, but reflects well upon your honor and integrity. It also provides an opportunity to introduce yourself to folks and make new friends. And you never know... that gentle you helped move things in from the parking lot, may turn out to be a visiting king from another kingdom when you see him in garb later. Likewise, you can also check to see if the folks running things need assistance setting up activities for the event or aid in preparing feast.

## Now what do I do?

There are a number of things to do, including:

1. Watch. With so many things going on and so many people about, you can "window shop" to see what things you're interested in. Watch the folks who are doing fighting or archery. See if it interests you, either as a participant or as a spectator. Just like modern sports and Olympic competitions, SCA martial activities can be enjoyable to watch. Also look at other people's garb, armour or projects they are working on. You may find something new you want to learn more about or try your hand at.
2. Participate. The variety of activities going on throughout the day can range from martial activities to medieval games, from competitions to classes, from discussion groups to hands-on workshops. When you find something that intrigues you, check it out...take part in it. Many times there are displays of local craftsmanship. Take the time to look at the items...and should there be a populace judging going on, cast your vote too. (This is usually done by way of a friendly "bean count". If you like a particular item on display, you drop a token <supplied by the folks running the event> into a cup to indicate your vote. At the end of the day, the item with the most tokens wins.) Even if the event is one where there are formal competitions and the judging is done by select judges, it's still a great idea to view the items entered to see the quality and talent of the crafters, and perhaps find someone to advise you on one of your own projects.
3. Merchants. A lot of events will have people selling wares you might find useful, such as feast gear, garb, jewelry or armour. At some of the larger events (Lilies War) or specialty events (Kris Kinder) there are a LARGE number of merchants with items to peruse.
4. Socialize. Most people are more than willing to talk about whatever they are doing. If you politely inquire about someone's activity, project, garb, etc...you'll more than likely find yourself inundated with a wealth of information. Additionally, if you've brought a medieval game with you, ask if anyone is interested in playing. A lot of friends have been made during a round of chess, bocce or other medieval game.
5. Work on a project. If you have a craft or project that is portable, consider bringing it to an event and work on it there. This will have other folks stopping by to see what you're doing. It's a great way to make new acquaintances and to show off your area of interest.
6. Teach. As you become knowledgeable in an area of medieval culture or a craft practiced in the SCA, consider offering to teach a class at an event. You can teach at most events, even if it's not your own group. Simply make arrangements in advance with the Event Steward (usually by contacting them a month or two before the event, asking if you can teach a class).

## Food at Non-Camping Events

You are responsible for your own food, drink and other refreshments. A few events will have an Inn on site serving food for lunch. (Check the event flyer to see if an Inn is planned or not.) If not, you'll either need to bring food or plan to travel off site to find a restaurant. Some times a group of people will plan ahead and each purchase some food and share it amongst themselves. When determining what beverages to bring, know that some sites are considered "dry" and do not permit the use of alcohol. Some sites are considered "wet" and thus allow wine and beer **if you are of legal drinking age**. (Again, check the event flyer to see if the site is "wet" or "dry".) In the evening, after court (if the Crown or local Baronage are present), many events hold a feast. Some folks will again go off site for dinner...others will partake of the feast. If you wish to eat at the feast, you will need to have purchased a feast reservation (either prior to the event or at the Troll Booth when you checked in).

## Court

Court is the time the Royalty/Baronage uses to handle matters of state. This may include announcements important to an aspect of the SCA, presentations from the populace, promotion of upcoming events or activities, changes to kingdom law, noting the winners of the day's competitions and the presentation of awards to deserving gentles. Be polite, courteous and quiet when attending court.

## Feasts

Following the activities of the day and after court (if there is one), feast will commence. Here are some points to consider:

1. Food Allergies, Preferences or Sensitivities. It is your responsibility to find out if there is something you are allergic to, or just plain won't eat, at a feast. (The kitchen staff are usually willing to let you know what went into a recipe to make sure there's nothing present you are allergic to.) However, as feast time approaches things are hectic for the Feast Steward and crew, so be sure to go and ask about such matters several hours in advance. If it turns out that there are too many things you won't or can't eat due to allergies, you should be able to sell your feast reservation back to the Troll Booth (simply explain that you discovered there were too many things on the menu that you have allergies to). If you are a vegetarian, call ahead to the Feast Steward several days before the event and inquire if there are vegetarian friendly dishes. Many feasts offer plenty of dishes, so there may be enough available for you to consider it worth your money to eat feast.
2. Setting up the table. Make sure you've brought your feast gear. In preparation for the meal, set out on the table where you'll be sitting, your table cloth (if you have one) and feast gear (plate, bowl, goblet and eating utensils). Candle and candle holders too, if you wish. The idea is to create an ambiance of medieval flavor, so be sure not to drink beverages out of cans or modern looking bottles. Pour the drink into a goblet and stash the can and/or bottle away.
3. Dinner Partners. If there are folks you want to sit with at feast, be sure that you've spoken with them well in advance of feast time. This will help ensure that seating arrangements go smoothly. There is also a good chance that a few of the folks who will be sharing your table will be new to you. Remember that feast is yet another opportunity to meet and make new friends.
4. Feast Table Etiquette. There are a number of points to keep in mind:
  - a) Always remember that the servers are volunteers, so treat them with respect.
  - b) When there is entertainment being presented, try not to interrupt entertainers and keep conversation to a minimum during performances. Be sure to applaud the entertainers, they are giving up some of their feasting time for your pleasure.
  - c) If you must get up and go speak to people during the feast, try not to block the servers from performing their duties.
  - d) Conversation should be kept to SCA-related or medieval topics as people are often sitting close together and cannot help but overhear you speaking. It is also a good idea to refrain from gossiping about anything you don't want the entire Kingdom to know.
5. Unusual Dishes. If a dish comes along that you are unsure about, take a small sample of it to put on your plate. Try at least one bite of it, you may be surprised. There are many medieval dishes that at first appear unusual to us, but are actually quite tasty. We recommend that you have an extra bowl for your place setting that is a "gah bowl" or "bone bowl". This is a waste receptacle for things like chicken or fish bones, or any food samples that you decide you don't like.
6. The High Table. If there is Royalty present, they will be seated at a head table. When you are passing by this table, you should treat this as if they were Sitting in State and give them a small bow or curtsy. If you wish to speak with Them, approach to the edge of the Royal Presence and wait to be acknowledged. Then bow, step forward and speak with Them. When you are through, give another quick bow and leave.
7. Toasts. In our kingdom there are some pre-set toasts that are given. The first is to the King & Queen. This is done by the ranking noble who is present at the feast. Although, if the feast is being held in a Barony, the Baronage (usually the Baron) may take the right of first toast as they are the Crown's Representatives. The second toast is the Prince & Princess (if it is during a time when there are heirs to the Throne). This toast is done by the next highest ranking noble who is present. If the feast is being held in a barony, then another toast is given to the local Baronage (done by the next ranking noble in line). At the end of the feast, the cooks and servers are toasted and this is done by those sitting at High Table. If there was no High Table, then by the next highest ranking noble after the ones who did the previous toasts should do it. During the feast, following the toasts to the Royalty and Baronage, other toasts may be given. There is no set structure to these toasts or to who gives them. These "extra" toasts used to be fairly common but in more recent times are done less often.
8. Clean Up. Sometimes washing facilities will be made available after a feast, sometimes not. Pack a plastic bag in your feast basket that will hold all your feast gear, that way if there are no washing facilities, you can just scrape your plates well and bag them up to take home to wash. **DO NOT WASH YOUR GEAR IN THE BATHROOM**. (Those sinks are not set up to handle food substances and you could plug a drain, causing the Autocrats to have to call an emergency plumber to unclog drains, thus adding a significant cost to the group.)

## **Post-Revels**

A Post-Revel is a gathering of folks following the end of the official functions of an event. This may be at the event site or at home of a local member. Folks will be engaged in various activities that can include playing musical instruments, singing, performing Bardic Recitals, dancing, playing period games, or sitting in small groups and conversing. Feel free to join in any one of these activities. Then when you're ready, call it a day.

## **When Your Group is Hosting an Event \*An Important Thing to Know\***

When visiting other groups and attending their events, you get to relax and enjoy all the activities going on. However, when your group is hosting the event, you have the responsibility of helping take care of some of the activities of the event. This includes volunteering to help with things like:

1. Set-up (preparing the site in advance of the event)
2. Activities (overseeing a competition, teaching a class, handling a list, etc)
3. Heralding Duties (making announcements, call participants to a tourney field)
4. Gofer Duties (run errands for the Event Steward or Feast Steward)
5. Royalty Liaison (act as assistant to the Royalty and their Retinue)
6. Feast Helper (assist with cooking, serve at feast)
7. Clean up (help pick up, sweep, mop and clean the site used) <It is the creed of the SCA to always leave a site cleaner than we found it.>

Helping your group with the events it puts on reflects on your integrity and honor. When you are a responsible and willing participant in the group, you earn respect and friendship that will always stand you in good stead.

## **SCA Time...**

On occasion you may hear remarks made about "SCA Standard Time". It's meant to imply that in the SCA everything runs about a half hour behind the time it's scheduled for. While it is true that there are times when things get started later than originally intended, one should never expect things to ALWAYS be that way. Some events, especially ones that have specialty classes (such as Clothier's Seminar, RUSH) run on an exacting schedule. Because many times the Royalty are present at an event, and things are scheduled around Their Majesties needs, things can be fluid. The reason for this is that many times the Crown is having to deal with matters involving the running of the kingdom and cannot always put an exact time to the discussions they need to have with people. Thus, if the King and Queen have to allot more time to take care of a problem, get court business prepared or something else...then other happenings at the event could be postponed for a little bit. So don't be surprised if you have to wait for a scheduled activity to commence, but don't count on it.