

= Furry convention =

A furry convention (also furry con or fur con) is a formal gathering of members of the furry fandom ? people who are interested in the concept of fictional non @-@ human characters with human characteristics . These conventions provide a place for fans to meet , exchange ideas , transact business and engage in entertainment and recreation centered on this concept . Originating in California , USA during the mid @-@ 1980s , there are now over 40 annual furry conventions worldwide , mostly in North America and Europe . The largest furry convention is Anthrocon which is held each year in Pittsburgh , Pennsylvania .

Furry conventions offer a range of volunteer @-@ led programming , usually focusing on anthropomorphic art , crafts , music and literature . Some raise money for charity . Attendees often dress up and wear artistic name badges for identification , though the majority do not bring fursuits . They may also spend money on the work of amateur and professional artists , both directly and at auction .

= = Origin and growth = =

Furry conventions started in mid @-@ 1986 with parties at popular science fiction conventions , such as Westercon and BayCon in the San Francisco Bay Area . Over time , these parties split off into conventions of their own , starting with ConFurence 0 in 1989 . Attendance at furry conventions has been growing , with the number of conventions , total attendance of all conventions and maximum size of a single convention all doubling over the period 2000 ? 2006 .

Furry conventions sometimes start out as furmeets , where groups of local fans meet at a regular location , often on a scheduled basis . As the local community grows , these groups may put on events which attract dealer attention or significant fan activity and which become recognized as fully @-@ fledged conventions . Other conventions spring up in the wake of discontinued events ; for example , Califur was founded in 2004 following the final ConFurence in 2003 , in order to keep a furry convention in the Los Angeles Basin and Furpocalypse was founded in 2014 , after FurFright hosted their last event in 2013 .

= = Activities = =

Convention programming includes presentations , panels , workshops and tutorials on anthropomorphic culture , from literature , fiction and art to science , technology and spirituality . The convention will often provide space for stand @-@ up comedy routines by entertainers like Uncle Kage and 2 , filk music , many kinds of gaming , and roleplaying sessions , as well as numerous puppeteering and performing arts events . A unifying theme is common for larger events .

Most conventions will feature some kind of an art show , in which artists ' work is displayed , often for direct purchase or auction during the convention . There will often be a Dealers Den where art and comic book distributors and other merchants can sell their wares for a fee , and an Artists ' Alley where individual artists are given space for no fee or a token fee , usually on the condition that they only sell their own work . Artists may also trade art between each other using sketchbooks . Erotic art is typically allowed if kept separate from other pieces , and only shown to adult attendees ; a few conventions are rated strictly PG @-@ 13 . Individual transactions are relatively small (usually around US \$ 10 ? \$ 50 for sketches or badges , \$ 10 ? \$ 200 for auction pieces) , but the total can approach US \$ 100 @, @ 000 at the largest events (excluding professional dealers) .

Major conventions tend to have a rave on at least one evening . Often there is a " fursuit @-@ friendly " dance prior to the main event , with raised lighting and slower music to offset fursuiters ' reduced vision and mobility . The use of glowsticks and illuminated poi are popular once the lights are dimmed . A furry convention is also an opportunity to socialize , and private parties for subgroups of the fandom are common .

Conventions with significant numbers of fursuiters may offer an event known as the furry games , furry races , or critterlympics . These focus on feats of dexterity suited to multiple players in teams ,

such as dragging a sled filled with plush toys or other fursuiters around a marked track , or racing back and forth while tethered to one another with a hula hoop .

Some conventions have established charity auctions , which (in the US) usually raise several thousand dollars for the convention 's yearly charity , typically a wildlife refuge , nature reserve , animal shelter , sanctuary or rescue group . Organizers may also donate from the convention 's own funds . In total , furry conventions raised over US \$ 50 @, @ 000 for charity in 2006 , with Further Confusion and Anthrocon raising over US \$ 60 @, @ 000 throughout their history .

= = Attendees = =

Attendees include artists and dealers offering products and services for sale to fans , and those wish to buy them . Others come for the programming , or to meet friends or other furry fans in general . Many attend for all of these reasons . Some later publish a con report detailing their experiences .

Attendees of major conventions receive a bag with the convention book (or conbook) , a lavishly illustrated volume featuring themed artwork , fiction and articles submitted by members and the Guests of Honor , along with a description of the event 's programming , staff , rules , guests and any charity being supported by the convention . Local restaurant information and a combination pocket schedule and map may also be included . Sponsors often receive additional items such as T @- @ shirts , pins or ribbons , as well as faster registration badge pick @- @ up and on @- @ site meals (some conventions provide a con suite with basic refreshments for all members) . They may also be displayed prominently in convention publications .

Fans may wear a full or partial fursuit or other costume to express their identity and entertain others , though typically less than 15 % of attendees bring a costume , and few of these wear them all the time . Others may wear accessories such as ears or a tail , particularly outside the main convention area . Nearly all will wear one or more custom convention badges featuring a depiction of their anthropomorphic persona , some with attached ribbons providing an indicator of social status , such as a notice of affiliation , or sponsorship of the convention . Sales of such accessories form a part of the commerce at furry conventions .

Attendees under the age of majority are commonly allowed to attend with a notarized parental permission slip or accompanied by an adult . Eurofurence is one exception , only admitting those above 18 . Underage attendees are usually given a distinctive badge to allow staff and dealers to restrict access to mature content . Government @- @ issued photo ID is usually required .

= = Organization and staffing = =

Furry conventions are run and staffed by volunteers , though venues may require certain activities to be contracted out . Event funding typically relies on convention registrations . Many of the larger conventions are incorporated as non @- @ profit organizations , usually to achieve tax @- @ exempt status and safeguard the organizers ' personal assets - in the US , some are 501 (c) (3) charities , while others are registered as recreational clubs . The largest events may require up to a hundred volunteers , not including gofers . Volunteers are thanked for their participation during the closing ceremonies , which are usually well @- @ attended , and often receive T @- @ shirts or other benefits .

= = Timing and duration = =

Most furry conventions take place over a weekend , with events scheduled between Friday evening and Sunday afternoon . Saturday is typically the busiest day , as most fans must return home on Sunday . One @- @ day passes are sometimes sold at a reduced price .

Reasons for this include :

Most fans would have to take a vacation from work or study to attend an event held during the work week .

Transportation costs are often lower for weekend travelers .

Hotels have few business travelers during the weekend , making it much easier to reserve a block of rooms and secure space for programming at a reduced price . Many fans are students and have little discretionary income , so hotel and convention fees are important factors .

As a given convention expands in growth over the years , increased demand for programming often results in events scheduled late into the night . Convention activities may also be extended to Thursday and early Friday for early arrivals . Unofficial activities are frequently coordinated by groups of people on Sunday evening and Monday morning , usually open to anyone who wishes to join , and may include bowling , bar hopping , visits to arcades , shopping malls , theme parks , zoos , dinner or morning brunch .

= = Media and public perception = =

While small , and often avoiding media coverage , furry conventions have increasingly become a topic of attention for the news and mass media :

The Commercial Appeal covered Mephit FurMeet 7 in September 2003 . Two years later , The Memphis Flyer did a piece about MFM 2005 .

An October 2003 episode of CSI featured PafCon , a fictional furry convention held in Las Vegas . Reactions to the show were varied .

A CBC Newsworld episode of Culture Shock about furies spent much of its time covering Howloween 2003 in November .

The News Tribune of Tacoma wrote a short article about Conifur Northwest 2004 .

The Financial Times Weekend Magazine took a look at Anthrocon 2005 .

The Corner News of Auburn , Alabama covered Rocket City FurMeet 2006 .

Several newspapers were invited to attend Anthrocon 2006 , including the Pittsburgh Tribune @-@ Review , the Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette , and the Pittsburgh City Paper , which printed both a preview and an extensive review . When local television station KDKA @-@ TV showed up , chairman Samuel Conway gave a short television interview outside the convention hotel . There was similar coverage in 2007 .

The Montreal Gazette covered Anthrofest 2007 .

Eurofurence 13 received extensive coverage by several regional newspapers in Thuringia .

An undercover reporter from Hartford Advocate attended FurFright 2007 and published her findings

A suspected chlorine gas attack on December 7 , 2014 , resulted in nineteen Midwest FurFest attendees being sent to the hospital . MSNBC " Morning Joe " host Mika Brzezinski was so amused that she had walk off the set of the show due to uncontrollable laughter .

One public misconception ? popularized by the CSI episode " Fur and Loathing " ? is that furry conventions are places for people to dress up as animals and perform sexual acts with each other . In an article about furies , Vanity Fair described some hotel guests as " stunned " , with some calling convention @-@ goers " freaks " , " blatant homosexuals " , and various derogatory terms . Some U.S. Army personnel present during the same convention described attendees as " a little unusual " and " people that have problems " , while others considered the event " something nice to bring kids to . "