

ATTENDING YOUR FIRST CONVENTION

(OR LOSING YOUR CONVENTION VIRGINITY)



AN OTAKU SURVIVAL GUIDE

Visit the Otaku Survival Guide Website <http://www.otakusurvivalguide.com>

Print out your own checklists to use.
Talk with others about conventions and plan carpools.
Submit your own questions and find answers.
See sneak peeks of upcoming books.

Otaku Survival Guide Titles:

Attending Your First Convention
Cosplay Joy-Mayhem
State of the Publishing Industry
Self-Publishing for Sane People
A Parent's Guide to the Cultural Divide

Check out the website for a more up-to-date list.

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Interior Artists Credited on Page 20
Cassie's Author Pic by Roku-Chan



Cassie Richoux

Main writer and designer for the books, and occasionally bad artist. She lives in Portland Oregon and has dreams of starting her own publishing company for young adult fantasy books with a manga twist. The Otaku Survival Guide project is her baby, and she just happened to rope some unsuspecting friends into it.



First Convention:
Anime Iowa 2001



Heather Imig

Unsuspecting friend, roommate, and general minion, she has aspirations of quitting her day job and playing video games all day. Now if only she could win the lottery.

First Convention:
Anime Iowa 2002

Chelsea Campbell

Editor Extraordinaire and over committed student of Latin, Greek, and French. Somehow, though, she manages to keep track of the English language enough to write young adult novels and edit these books.



First Convention:
KumoriCon 2006

VIEWING ROOM

Anime conventions started as a place to see new anime and watch subtitled tapes that had been painstakingly translated by fans. While there will be new releases and premiers occasionally, now it is more of a chance to watch what is currently released. Companies are getting stricter about fan subs, and many fans find that the viewing room is not as big of a draw as it used to be. AMV contests and fan videos, though, continue to be popular and draw in the crowds.

GUESTS

Varying from American voice actors to Japanese manga-ka, guests can be the big draw of a convention. Some people might underestimate the influences and information that American guests can bring to a convention, but they tend to know the industry and are great people to listen to if you want to get into voice acting, translating, or any other aspect. Most are friendly and won't mind you saying hi when you see them walking down the hall.

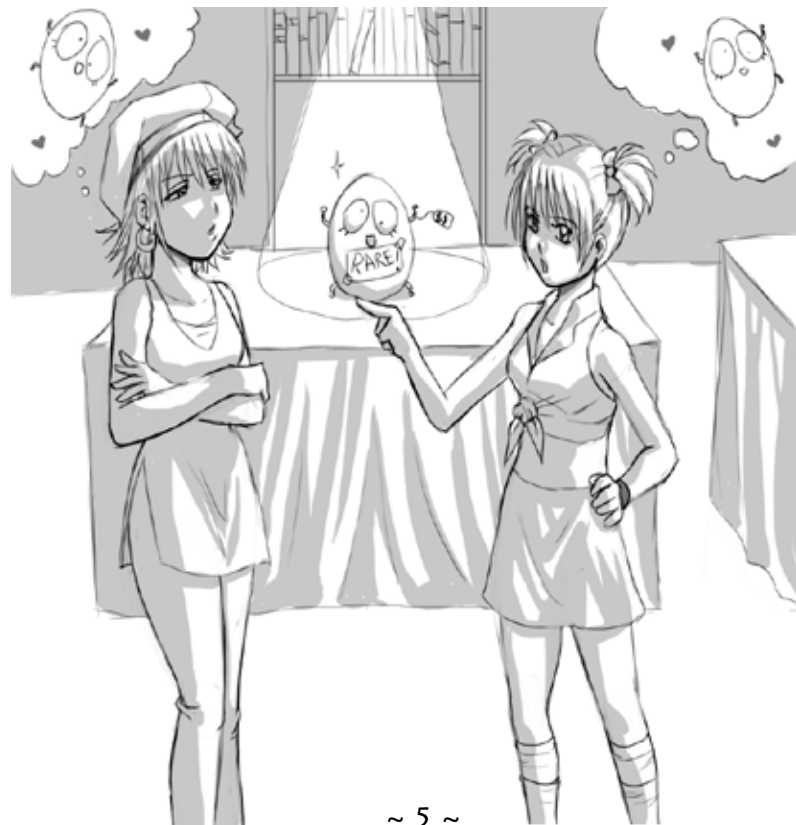
Remember though, guests are not always "on duty," and they need their rest time as much as you do. Always be polite to them, they are giving up their weekends to be here talking to you. Typically, they are reimbursed for travel expenses and given a hotel room, but they certainly don't make money off of conventions. So treat them with the respect they deserve.

DEALERS ROOM

Here is where you fulfill all your anime dreams and go into severe debt after the weekend. Make sure to have cash on hand, since only about half of the dealers are usually able to take credit cards, and the ATM may very well run out of money by the end of the weekend,

especially if I need to use it. Trust me, going on a quest for the nearest ATM in an unfamiliar city is a bad way to kill a few hours.

Dealers tend to carry a large variety of anime t-shirts, action figures, pillows, dolls, and everything else you can imagine. While some of the stuff is available in America, many times you can find odd little things you will never see again.



In order to use your first time in the most effective way, try to have some idea of what you are looking for. If you just want to browse, late in the afternoon on Friday or on Sunday are going to be your best times. Early on Friday will be the rush, and there are typically too many people at each store to really get to browse. I always have a list in my mind of what specifically I am looking for.

Prices will vary, and unless you really want something, it might be best to keep shopping around. I have bought many a toy only to see it two stores down for ten dollars less. It is a trade-off though, because if you really want it, then you might want to get it before someone else does. Take a look around the store and see how many of the item they have. If it's the only one, then it might be better to risk overpaying in order to get the item of your dreams.

Manga is another great thing to buy at conventions, because most stores that specialize in manga will have convention specials. There is also a much larger selection of DVDs, but since



dealers don't get them at the same kinds of discounts as Wal-Mart and Best Buy, the prices can be somewhat high. A lot of dealers will make deals with people who are buying multiple titles.

ARTISTS' ALLEY

Here is where artists show off their wares. Everything in the Artists' Alley is going to be hand produced, though the original artwork may be being sold as prints or in a book. It's a great place to find new artists and get costume pictures of your favorite characters. Want to see Phoenix Wright and Miles Edgeworth making out? Someone there will draw it for you.

Cosplay props and jewelry are also often sold here, along with statues, dresses, pillows, stuffed dolls, and whatever else some creative person has figured out how to bring a new anime spin to.

COSPLAY

Dressing up, and it's not even Halloween yet! This is why many people go to cons, to the extent that there are even cosplay centered cons these days.

Anyone can dress up, and you do not have to enter any cosplay contests. As far as contests go, cons will vary, but there is typically one onstage contest (often on Saturday evening), and then a hall contest or some kind of roving contest that is less formal and takes place over the entire weekend.

If you want to go to the cosplay contest to watch, keep an eye on the line or ask a staff member how it is being run. Some cons will give out tickets ahead of time, while others simply have you line up. The skits are the main draw of the contest, but if you'd rather just see the costumes,

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

EAT and DRINK WATER. Silly, I know. But so many people forget these two little things. Most cons try to keep jugs of water around, and at the very least there are drinking fountains. Save a little room in your bag for a water bottle.

Don't just eat in the con-suite, unless they provide a good range of food. You need to remember your fruits and veggies now more than ever. A good diet will help you make it through the weekend without a Sunday sugar crash.

Wear sunscreen as well: you never know how much you are going to be outdoors. I've had to stand outside for hours to register, or travel between buildings at a con that has outgrown one hotel.

When you leave your hotel room, make sure you have everything you need. Keep in mind though that you might have to leave a backpack at the bag check when you enter the dealers room. So have your money in a separate wallet or small bag that you can take inside of crowded rooms with you. If you are wearing a costume, make sure to build in pockets or carry a small bag.

THE JAPANESE SNACK FOOD OBSESSION OR HOW THE HELL DO YOU DRINK RAMUNE?

By now you've probably heard of Pocky. That yummy biscuit stick dipped in frosting and available in every flavor you can think of. I recently had pumpkin pocky, and I must say, that's probably my favorite so far.

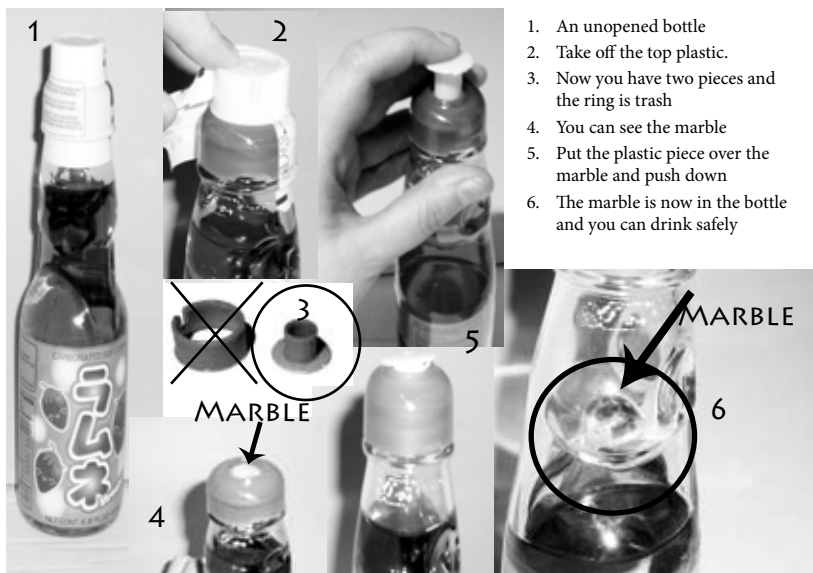
Still, there are many more snack foods available at the anime convention than your almost common Pocky. While a few things can be bought at your local oriental food store, many other calorie laden forms of goodness can only be found at larger stores, or conventions. Some other popular snacks are Go Panda (a cookie panda stuffed with frosting) and Pretz (thin pretzels that come in a variety of flavors, though my favorite, Maple and Butter, has been discontinued apparently). Beyond those, it will depend on the convention and the dealers, but there are usually new and interesting things to try.

Japanese drinks are also popular at conventions. Anything with lots of caffeine is going to sell well at conventions and Japanese energy drinks often show up, sometimes containing the side ingredient of nicotine. Bawls might be an American drink, but it is pretty popular due to its high caffeine content and how well it lends itself to dirty jokes.

Which leads us to Ramune, a popular drink that often puzzles the drinker the first time they encounter it. The bottle is oddly shaped and it has a plastic lid that must be broken off. Once you do that, you have a plastic piece that looks like a cylinder with a circle top. Place it over the marble that you can now see, and push down hard.

The marble is kept in place by the carbon dioxide, until you dislodge it. Personally, I usually have to ask someone else to open it for me and I have yet to really get the hang of Ramune.

So now you have an open bottle, and a marble rolling around in the funny top. In theory, the experienced Ramune drinker can trap the marbles in the groove, so give it a try. I've heard theories about why the marble is there, but I can't seem to find any official evidence. The best theory is that it keeps you from drinking too fast. Whatever the reason for the design, the drink has been around since 1872 and still symbolizes the beginning of summer across Japan.



TIPS AND TRICKS

Be nice, be friendly. It will go a long way towards getting accurate information, advice, and your place held in line. Especially be nice to staff and volunteers.

Volunteer, because there is no better way to find out about the convention experience and meet new people.

If you want to go to a convention that's far away and you're the only person you know going, check out the con's forums. There might be other people in your area who are going and can give you a ride.

Remember, everyone you meet will have at least one thing in common with you. They like anime. You are surrounded by hundreds, if not thousands, of possible new friends. Talk to people.

Just because a panel room is full when you get there, that doesn't mean that seats won't clear up as the allotted time goes on. Many conventions will allow some standing at the back of a panel room, and you can watch for seats from there.

Browsing in the dealers room is best done in the hour before closing, Sunday afternoon, or during big events, like the cosplay or AMV contests.

Carry cash with you, so that it's easier to keep track of how much you are spending. Money is more real when you are holding it in your hands, instead of just deducting it from a banking account.

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

Without them, this wouldn't have been possible (or at the very least, as pretty)



BLK KITTI
the art of
BLKDEHLER, AKA 'ZEDA'
<http://www.blk-kitti.net>

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IchorInk.com



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An artist I use for a lot of work, including the original character designs for the Otakus. Her work appears on the cover of this book.

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CHECK LISTS

TO-DO BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

- Check the con's website for any updates
- Check the weather report. Leave emergency numbers/hotel information for family or friends, especially if someone is house sitting or watching pets for you
- Print off all maps and make sure you have a basic idea of your route. It can help to highlight the route you plan to take on the map
- Make sure you know which hotel you are staying at
- Find out on the con's website when you can begin checking in to get your badge. Some big cons will even have check-in the night before the con officially opens. Know the location of these check-ins
- Make a list of any manga or DVDs that you need, so that you aren't asking yourself later if it's Hellsing number 4 or 5 you're missing

IMPORTANT PAPERS:

- State issued ID
- Print-offs for pre-registration and hotel registration numbers
- Maps
- Weekend schedules if available on the website

FOR PACKING

- * Enough shirts, pants, socks, and underwear (one for every full day)
- Swimsuit
- PJs
- Comfortable shoes
- Light jacket
- * Water bottle
- Shower needs – hair care, skin care, soap
- * Deodorant
- * Toothbrush, toothpaste
- Cell phone charger
- Emergency phone numbers
- Camera, film, batteries
- Extra AA batteries
- Any prescription medicines
- Band-Aids
- Headache medicine
- Flashlight
- * Pencil, pens, highlighter, paper
- Wet Wipes
- Dry foods – granola bars, cereal, bread, sandwich toppings, trail mix



<http://gubaba.digiscent.net>

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