

BIRKA 2020 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

So you're a merchant at Birka, and you've got questions! Please see this document first, and remember you can search for specific topics using Ctrl+F (or Cmd+F on a Mac.) You can also just use the table of contents below or go to View-> Show Document Outline.

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Pre-Birka Lead Up Questions

What space do we use to sell?

The Expo Center at the Doubletree Inn & Suites in Manchester NH. Yes, it is the same hotel. They have a new owner.

It is a vast room which easily houses 200+ merchants for the two-day event. Our spaces are arranged into 6-12 table islands with a few smaller rows against the walls.

Can I sleep in my booth?

No. There is no sleeping space in the Expo center. It is not rated by the fire marshal or the state of New Hampshire as a lodging.

What happens if I need to cancel?

Please contact the coordinator ASAP. If you cancel 7 days in advance or more, you will receive a full refund of all fees. If you cancel within the 7 days window, you will receive a refund only if we are able to fill your space with someone from the Waiting List. We cannot guarantee this, but typically we are able to fill spaces until 24 hours before the event.

If it is the morning of the event, please attempt to contact the Coordinator anyway. We may have other merchants who can use the space. The Merchant Coordinator can be reached at (781)254-5384.

Is costuming/garb required?

Yes. All merchants must make some attempt at pre-1700s clothing. Please do **not** wear fairy wings, elf ears, anime wigs, or cosplay. Attendees will be required to follow the same rule.

Are there spaces in the Armory?

No. It is no longer our policy to have any merchants in the Armory. The merchants were consistently unhappy and jockeying for a spot in the Expo Center, with no one “happy” to be there. The Armory itself is extensively used by other groups, and merchants are an unnecessary excess.

Hotel and Accommodations Questions

Why can't I get a room in the main hotel?

Sadly, the hotel has a limited number of rooms, which usually sell out months before the event. We cannot run our merchant process early enough in the year to make it viable that merchants get first pick of rooms. However, there are many hotels in the area which are eager for overflow business, and literally all of them are cheaper than the Doubletree. Many run shuttles or have special deals. Please be sure to mention you're with Birka.

Comfort Inn Hotel (603) 688-2600

Quality Inn Manchester (603) 668-6110

Econolodge (603) 642-0111

Hilton Garden Inn (603) 669-2222

Super 8 Manchester Airport (603) 623-0883

Best Western (603) 627-2525

Can we use the carts and trolleys offered by the hotel?

If we see the hotel luggage carts in the Expo, one of the hauling and lugging assistants to the Merchant Coordinator will take charge of it and make sure it continues moving and gets used or returned quickly. We are allowed no more than two of the 12 hotel

luggage carts in the Expo, and if we see more of them, we will have to stop the users and return *all* of them to the front of the room after unloading them.

Please make every effort to purchase your own hand cart or wagon to move your goods. The hotel is under no obligation to let people use the luggage carts for the Expo.

In the event that you are using a hotel luggage cart, and have no other option, please do not take a cart until you are completely packed. If we see a cart standing half full while someone painstakingly wraps wares in paper and puts them in boxes, we will take the cart away and put it back in circulation.

Under no circumstances can we use any other kind of cart or conveyance for Birka Merchants. This includes catering carts, table trolleys, and the lifters for stacks of chairs. If any are found with a merchants belongings on them, you will be asked to leave the event. The hotel is extremely strict on this point, as it violates their insurance for anyone who isn't hotel staff to touch moving equipment.

Are there nearby food options?

Along with a multitude of food ordering online and by phone, the hotel provides catering options for daytime food and a restaurant for the evening. Outside food is allowed if you are bringing it for yourself and your immediate group; please do not offer it openly to customers or make a large presentation of giving away food.

Are our wares secure overnight?

The Expo center will be locked from 11pm Friday to 7am Saturday, and locked again 10pm Saturday to 9am Sunday. If you have a desperate need to access something left in the Expo outside of those hours, please contact the Merchant Coordinator at (781)254-5384.

Spaces, Tables and Map Questions

Can I get more space by bringing my own tables?

No. A space is a space, with or without a table in it. You are paying for the rental of space, not for the rental of table. We include the tables, gratis, because frankly, it is far easier for us to supply tables and have them all loaded before merchants arrive than to mark off each location and try to fit together hundreds of tables from different manufacturers.

Why are some tables see-thru? Can I get more tables by adopting one of those spaces?

Tables which appear to be transparent are "spaces" with no table in them. They are paid for by a merchant who wants to put a rack or display there. There are no "untaken" spaces on this map.

I didn't get the space I wanted! Can you change it?

Maybe. If you want *that* space specifically, and someone else has seniority there and we have no intervening reason to move them, we can't help you. If it's a health or safety issue to move away from something, we will do our absolute best to help.

Why am I in X space?

Please note that of the 100-150 merchants per Birka event, at least half ask for special accommodations. These may be proximity to bathroom, allergies, medical needs, displays that require a certain setup, etc. We do our best to accommodate as many of you as possible, but the more needs we run across, the more we are painted into a corner.

Can't you add more tables in that spot there? or Why aren't there more islands of X size?

This is the map as laid out and approved by the fire marshal. We cannot, under any circumstances, change the layout and positioning of this map. We will do our best to find the right spot to support you, but that's all I can do.

Why is one of my tables small?

Each island requires an egress for fire safety. We have struggled for some years with trying to make this as fair as possible, because we understand that people want as much stock space as possible. However, we cannot create an egress without a 6 foot table somewhere in the mix.

If no one in the island has open areas (rack spots, no table spots, etc) then we place the egress with the merchant who has the most tables in the island. If you wish to volunteer to have the egress table yourself or if you and all your island mates have decided to climb under tables (which some do) we are happy to change the map accordingly.

Can I sell out of my hotel room?

No. We do not have permission to sell from a hotel room, and it is prohibited in New Hampshire. While there are a host of smaller activities and personal parties taking place in hotel rooms, there will be no officially sanctioned sales nor any good traffic to hotel rooms for selling.

What are the restrictions on displays?

A merchant's display of either wares or signage may not extend outside of their space in a way that intrudes on another merchant's space or into the walkways between spaces. The walkways are laid out to a minimum specification as per the fire code. That space is non-negotiable.

No display may have a roof or top which would impede the effectiveness of the hotel sprinkler system in the case of a fire. There are no official restrictions on the height of displays, but please keep both safety and fellow merchants in mind. Displays which seem unsafe or significantly impede the traffic or safety of another merchant may be removed.

Is there anything I cannot sell?

Per our agreement with the hotel, no "immediate eating" foods may be sold in the Expo center. Dry tea, spices, and things like mead kits are fine.

We require that your merchandise be historically appropriate or contribute to the atmosphere of the event in some way. Our agreement with the site specifically forbids any presence of gasoline, kerosine, acetylene, propane, or other flammable liquids. You may not have them on the premises. The site retains the right to refuse entry to or remove explicit or objectionable displays which would impair the standards of their establishment. We have never run into this situation. Let's keep it that way.

If you will be selling weapons, real or costume, you are responsible for compliance with all local, state, and federal ordinances. In addition to those, we request that no weapons of any kind be sold to a minor without the parent's *physical presence at the sale* and verbal consent.

Can I demonstrate incense, candles, perfume, and similar items?

Fire regulations do not permit the use or demonstration of any incense, candles, or other combustible products within the building. In addition, we request that you

exercise courtesy in demonstrating any product which may affect your neighbors. You may play music at a quiet to reasonable volume, unless your neighbors request that you stop. Please honor that request with no begrudging.

If you sell scented products, whose use does not involve fire, please keep them covered except for offering potential customers brief samples. There are many people who are extremely sensitive to scents, and we would prefer not to drive off customers or staff.

Arrival, Setup, and Logistics Questions

Where do we park?

There are three options for parking, though one is restricted to large vehicles only:

1. The Expo Center Parking Garage - Your ticket will be validated for a large discount. Please note that the garage height clearance is 7'.
2. The Large Vehicle Parking area - While anyone is welcome to unload there using the loading dock, ONLY vehicles over 7' or with a trailer may park in the lot. This will be checked by the hotel, and by event staff. SUVs or minivans under 7' who elect to circumvent paying for parking by using the large vehicle lot will be towed.
3. Street parking. As one would expect, street parking is very limited and may require meter or pay parking.

Is there a loading dock?

Yes. You may elect to use the loading dock located on Pleasant street and into the large vehicle parking area. Please do not do so if you are taking boxes out of a car or any other unloading process which would be better done in the Expo garage.

Note: Do not, under any circumstances, pull up and leave your vehicle in one of the two loading bay spots while you check in at the hotel or merchant troll. This sets other merchants back in their unloading process and causes significant delays. Vehicles left unattended and without word to the staff in the loading bay for more than thirty minutes may be towed.

How do you unload from the garage?

There is a door on the second and third floor of the garage which leads to the Expo center. If it is not the same floor as the Expo, you may use the elevator to get your things. The rear door to the Expo center will be open and attended.

If you are ready and able to unpack immediately, you are welcome to pull up next to the Expo center door along the wall - NOT in front of the walkway/door. That is an active area where people are trying to drive.

Can I pay someone to help me unload?

There are workers contracted with the event who can be hired on, for a nominal fee, much like hire-a-peasant at Pennsic. They are also willing to work in trade and barter. You may find them by their sashes labeled "BRUTE." Please treat them kindly.

Contact Information Questions

Something has gone wrong! How do I reach the Merchant Coordinator?

The Merchant Coordinator can be reached at (781)254-5384. This phone will be on, with a haptic alert system (to overcome the noise of the expo) throughout the event.

Can I text you instead of calling?

Yes. Please start by introducing yourself with "This is [Merchant Business Name]" so that the Merchant Coordinator is not left confused and with zero reference of who you are or what you're asking. After initial texts, you do not need to introduce yourself each time.

I have an emergency that isn't really SCA or Birka related. What do I do?

If you have any medical emergency or problem which would necessitate police involvement, please call 911. There are police and firemen on site for the entire event.

You may also contact the Merchant Coordinator, who can bring less urgent help to you, but if you feel the need to call for emergency support, please do.

Scheduling Questions

Birka Merchant Schedule 2020:

FRIDAY

10 am: Merchant Coordinator arrives to set up Expo. Volunteers are welcome.

3 pm: Merchants are authorized to begin setup. (Volunteers who have helped with setup may be authorized by the merchant coordinator to set up before this time **if** the room setup is complete.)

6 pm: Expo Center opens to sales.

10 pm: Expo Center closes to the public.

10:30 pm: Expo Center is locked for the night. Anyone still lingering at 10:15 will be **assailed by vuvuzelas**. The Merchant Coordinator and staff need sleep.

SATURDAY

7 am: Expo Center is unlocked. Those arriving may begin setup and those who set up Friday are welcome to sleep in, or arrive any time after 7am.

9 am: Expo Center opens to sales.

Merchants are required to remain open between 9 am and 6 pm.

6 pm: Expo Center closes to the public.

Merchants who do not intend to stay for Sunday may pack out at this time.

9 pm: Expo Center is locked for the night.

SUNDAY

7 am: Expo Center is unlocked.

9 am: Expo Center opens to sales. **PLEASE BE READY.**

3 pm: Expo Center closes to the public.

6 pm: Expo Center must be cleared and empty.

Notice: All merchants must be out of the Expo Center by 5:30pm on Sunday. Anyone lingering at that time will be picked up and moved to the hallway. We must sweep and finish the hall before we leave and event staff must go home and sleep.