

# Advice for first-time AIC Annual Meeting attendees

So you're going to be attending your first AIC annual meeting! With more than 1000 attendees and over 200 talks this can be an exciting and overwhelming event, so to help our first time attendees have the best possible experience, we are providing some tips and advice for navigating the conference.

If you are not very familiar with AIC, one of the core values of AIC is equity and inclusion; we respect and honor all individuals. It is our firm intention that all attendees to the annual meeting should feel welcome, included, valued, and respected, regardless of race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, profession, or professional experience. We ask that all attendees abide by our code of conduct (given later on in the document) to ensure that this conference is enjoyed by all, including you- a first-time attendee!

## Before the conference

- **When should I arrive?** The main conference runs from May 22<sup>nd</sup> - May 24<sup>th</sup> but there are pre- and post- session events that you may want to attend. If you are only attending the main conference, we recommend arriving before 1 pm on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and departing on the 25<sup>th</sup> in order to ensure you can attend all sessions. The first all-attendee event is the Awards Ceremony, which starts at 4 pm on the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- **Where should I stay?** There are three conference hotels, the Marriott City Creek, the Marriott City Center and the Hilton Salt Lake City. The room rates are \$184-194 per night and information about them and the registration link are located [here](#). If you are driving, the hotels offer garage parking for \$24-29 a night.
- **How do I get to the hotels from Salt Lake City International Airport?** The Salt Lake City International Airport has webpages, dedicated to [ground](#), [public](#) and [bike](#) transportation options. In addition to taxis (the flat rate fare to downtown is \$27.00) ride share services such as Lyft and Uber are also available.

To catch the TRAX light rail service passengers should exit door 1A and go east. You'll take the Green Line to West Valley from the Airport Station, and if you're staying at a conference hotel, the best stop is Temple Square Station. The fare is a mere \$2.50 and it runs every 15 minutes or so.

- **What does my conference registration include?** Conference registration includes access to the Awards session, all General, Concurrent General, and

Specialty Group and Networks talks as well as access to the exhibit hall, poster sessions, coffee breaks and the opening.

- There are additional workshops, lunchtime programs, tours, and specialty group receptions that can be added to your registration for an additional cost. You may purchase these add-ons before the conference or by visiting the registration desk at the conference itself if there are still spaces available. Because space is often limited in these events we do recommend pre-purchasing tickets.
- **Are there funding opportunities to offset travel and registration costs?** AIC offers a variety of different funding opportunities, a full list is available [here](#), and a webinar describing the application process and some tips for creating a strong application is [here](#). Note that many have a December 15th application deadline so early planning is essential- so mark your calendars for next year if you've missed this year's deadline. Some relevant scholarships include:
  - [The George Stout Scholarship](#) supports meeting attendance for students or those who have graduated in the past two years.
  - The [FAIC/Kress Foundation International Speaker Scholarship](#)
- **In order to facilitate my experience I need specific accommodations, what should I do?** AIC is committed to making the Annual Meeting as accessible as possible. We work with the conference hotel to ensure that there are gender neutral bathrooms, a nursing mother's room, and a quiet room available. Please see the map in the program booklet or ask one of the AIC staff members at the registration desk if you need help locating these spaces. If there is something that will facilitate your experience such as access to a wheelchair lift equipped bus for transportation, a seat at the front of the lecture hall, a seat near an electrical outlet for a talk-to-text translator or gluten-free foods at the meals, please reach out to AIC Annual Meeting Director, Ruth Seyler at [rseyler@culturalheritage.org](mailto:rseyler@culturalheritage.org)
- **Can I bring my partner or a friend to the social events?** Yes! Guests are able to attend all workshops, tours, and Specialty Group receptions as long as an additional ticket is purchased for them.
- **Plan your schedule in advance.** With up to ten concurrent talks happening at once there are a plethora of choices to make. The meeting program is available [online](#) and you can create an account on Sched, bookmark talks and other events you're interested in, and use the Sched app to access this information on the fly!.

- Read the abstracts for each session and think about what sounds relevant, interesting or just fun. Remember that this meeting is an opportunity for cross-pollination between different disciplines and specialties and don't just read the abstracts of your own particular group.
- As you make your decisions remember that the programming will also be available as a virtual recording that you can watch after the meeting ends. This virtual component is freely accessible with your registration!
- You do not have to attend every session! Sometimes continuing a conversation with a new friend is more important than getting to the next session. And if you're overwhelmed or tired, please take a break.
- **What should I wear/pack?** The general dress code is business casual. Dressing in layers is often wise as temperatures in individual lecture rooms can vary widely; you may appreciate the ability to put on or take off a sweater or jacket.
  - Although not necessary, those who enjoy dressing up may find the opening reception a chance to do so. Of course, the RATS after party at WhyKiki (tickets available for \$25) is also a great excuse to shine!
  - Tours will take place rain or shine, so if you sign up for one, consider bringing comfortable shoes, a coat, and an umbrella.
- **Additional things to pack.** Networking is important so bring business cards to hand out to new acquaintances. Some way to take notes, be it a notebook, tablet or computer, is also a must. Please also consider bringing your own water bottle to help reduce waste. While snacks will be provided at coffee breaks consider bringing some of your favorites too.

## During the conference

- **Registration desk** is your point of contact for help during the conference. If you need anything, do not hesitate to ask individuals attending the desk, usually AIC staff members, for help. It's where you will:
  - **Pick up your registration packet** This will include your name badge-wearing it is necessary for admittance to the sessions. Tickets to all of your workshops and special events will be printed on the back of your

badge. Please check to make sure what you pre-registered for has been correctly included.

- AIC provides ribbons that can be attached to one's name tag to indicate preferred pronouns, please use them if you wish.
- **Types of programming** The AIC annual meeting features a variety of programming including:
  - **Awards** Every year AIC presents a [set of awards](#) that recognize members and allied professionals for outstanding and distinguished contributions to the field of conservation. This is a chance to join in the celebration of these individuals.
  - **Opening General Session** This is a set of eight 15 minute talks centered around the conference theme. It is a single track session.
  - **Concurrent General Sessions** These are a limited set of themed tracks that fit within the overarching meeting theme. They were proposed by individuals and the sessions are moderated by the proposers.
  - **Specialty Groups and Network Sessions.** Each Specialty Group and Network has the opportunity to run their own tracks centered on their particular subject of interest. These are often 20 minute talks but individual tracks may include shorter talks, panels or tip sessions.
    - Tips sessions are made up of short talks, often ~ 5 minutes, and provide a way for an individual to share a method, material or technique that they've discovered useful in their own practice. There is usually a separate call for tips presenters.
  - **Poster session** In addition to talks there are usually around 70 posters every year. The posters will be up for the majority of the conference for you to look at but there is always a set time when poster authors are asked to be available for questions from the attendees.
  - **Workshops** Workshops are usually held in the one to two days before and after the regular meeting program. The subject matter varies every year and may include hands-on components. There is an additional fee associated with these.
  - **Lunch Sessions** The lunch programs are widely varied every year. There is usually one Socratic Dialogue session, the purpose of which is not to find a solution to the subject, but instead to provide a safe, open

environment for participants to investigate what the essence is behind their own points of view as well as those of others.

- **Mistakes Session** Formally titled “A Failure Shared is Not a Failure, Learning From Our Mistakes” this session offers attendees a chance to share and learn from others’ experiences and can be truly cathartic. We are all human, we all make mistakes, and we are never alone!
- **Tours** Every city has its own unique culture, cultural heritage sites, and attractions. To enhance your visit to the host city a variety of educational and entertaining tours are offered. There is an additional fee associated with these.
- **Exhibit hall (AKA the Hub)** This is an opportunity to speak to representatives from a variety of different businesses about their products. Many of the exhibitors are long-time attendees of the conference and can become valued colleagues.
  - Vendors of conservation materials will have sample materials for you to handle and examine.
  - Instrument manufacturers may have demo instruments (i.e. microscopes, x-ray fluorescence spectrometers, IR cameras). Speaking with representatives is a good way to establish a relationship that may lead to longer term loans of instruments or to ‘friendly’ pricing.
  - Publishers will have books for purchase
    - Often the display copy will be available for purchase at a substantial reduction. These are first come first serve so if you are a bibliophile, visit these booths early!
  - Groups such as NCPTT, Friends of AIC, Sustainability, and the Health & Safety Committee often have booths with useful information and resources.
- **Networking** The Annual Meeting isn’t just about hearing new projects, ideas, research etc. The social aspects are equally as important! This is a great time to meet new colleagues that can lead to friendships, productive collaborations, fellowship opportunities and the like.
  - **Reach out before-hand** If there’s a colleague you particularly want to meet, email them before the meeting to see if they’ll be attending and if so, try and set up a coffee date. There will be tables and side spaces in the Exhibit hall where you can catch up and have a conversation.

- **Notice Board** There is always a notice board set up near the registration desk- this where fellowship and job opportunities will be posted, but you can also post notes to other attendees.
- **Say hello!** If you don't know anyone at the meeting, you have to start somewhere. Many of us are introverted or shy, but opening a conversation can be as easy as asking someone if a seat is taken in a lecture hall, or commenting on the coffee break offerings. Then introduce yourself and don't be afraid to mention it's your first time attending.
- **Talk to the speakers** While you might feel too intimidated to ask a question in a session, do take the opportunity to introduce yourself afterwards to speakers to ask questions or to let them know that you liked their presentation. Q&A time after each talk is limited so it's perfectly acceptable to ask questions outside of the lecture, and it's always nice to have your efforts be of interest- they will welcome this interaction!
- **Take advantage of the posters** The posters are a great way to not only meet the authors of the posters but also to engage with other attendees. Strike up a conversation about the poster with someone else who is reading it.
- **Introduce yourself to the AIC Board and Staff** The AIC board members and the AIC staff members will be wearing special ribbons on their name tags. Please introduce yourself to them- they are friendly, want to make your acquaintance, can introduce you to other attendees and are always happy to make sure that you are not left standing awkwardly alone!

There will also be an opportunity to meet many of the board members in the exhibit hall on the 21<sup>st</sup> from 7-7:30 in the Hub at a designated table in the demonstration area.

- **Smaller events** The large number of attendees gathering in the exhibit hall can seem overwhelming! Take the opportunity of less populous events such as workshops, tours, lunch programs (particularly the Socratic Dialogue session) and Specialty Group receptions to make new acquaintances. Sitting beside someone on a bus on the way to a venue is a great chance to make a new friend.
- **ECPN?** Are you an emerging professional? Please reach out to [The Emerging Conservation Professionals Network](#) they are an active community that is incredibly supportive. Their officers would love to meet

you, describe what they do and tell you about ways to become involved if you are interested There are often annual meeting events geared towards helping our younger colleagues that may include:

- **ECPN happy hour** This year it's on May 21<sup>st</sup>, from 7:30- 9. Stop in after meeting the AIC board!
- **Graduate reunions** Each of the conservation graduate programs in conservation hosts a reunion at the annual meeting. Even if you are not an alumnus you are free to attend. If you are considering applying to the programs this is an excellent way to meet people who have attended a given program and find out more about it.
- **Portfolio review** The US conservation graduate programs require a conservation portfolio and a portfolio of one's own art. This is a friendly venue to get advice on how to improve yours. They have also recorded a webinar "[Showcasing your work: preparing and maintaining a conservation portfolio](#)" and have added additional comments [online](#).
- **Flash networking** This organized meet and greet provides a way for emerging professionals to meet colleagues who are more established in their field. This year INCAA/CAN! are co-hosting a speed mentoring lunch session on Wednesday May 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- ECPN also has prepared a lot of valuable resources focused on emerging professionals, including a tip sheet on [attending conferences](#), a [YouTube video](#) guide to presenting talks and posters (and a [follow-up commentary](#) on it), and a [PowerPoint presentation checklist](#). A complete summary of these and other helpful resources can be found on the [AIC Wiki page](#).
- **Necesita ayuda?** Individuals fluent in Spanish will be wearing tags that say 'Spanish Speaker' on their name tags. Even if you don't need help, feel free to stop and introduce yourself to them- they are a good way to network with the Spanish speaking community at the meeting.
  - For emerging professionals ECPN has prepared a [rack card in Spanish](#) describing their network.
- **Hungry?** Having lunch or dinner with a new acquaintance is a great way to cement the connection. There are a lot of nearby restaurants, cafes and coffee bars nearby the convention center- let Google Maps be your friend.

- If you forgot to pack something or want to stock up on snacks there is a Walgreens a 4 minute walk from the convention center (72 S. Main St.), and Harmons Grocery is store is an 8 minute walk (135 E. 100 S).
- **Code of Conduct** For all meetings, our code of conduct stipulates a cordial tone and respectful attitude during any and all exchanges. AIC is committed to an inclusive and equitable environment for all, and instances of mistreatment, including abusive, racist, sexist, harassing, or threatening behavior toward other attendees, AIC staff, venue staff, or anyone connected to the event are not tolerated. If you feel you have experienced such behavior, please report the incident as soon as possible. Reports can be made by emailing AIC Meetings Director, Ruth Seyler, at [rseyler@culturalheritage.org](mailto:rseyler@culturalheritage.org). At all times, your confidentiality will be protected. If a participant engages in behavior that violates this code of conduct, AIC may take any action it deems appropriate, including warning the offender, their expulsion from the meeting with no refund, or referral to the Ethics and Standards Committee.

## After the conference

- **Business meetings** The AIC all-member business meeting will be held virtually on June 4<sup>th</sup> at 1-2:30 pm EST and is open to all attendees and AIC members. All specialty groups and networks also have business meetings, many of which will also be held virtually (check the meeting schedule for exact dates). Please feel free to attend them. This is another opportunity to put faces to names and hear about the state of the group, ongoing efforts, and perhaps even volunteer to help.
- **Follow up** Capitalize on those new personal connections you made at the meeting. Send short emails to people expressing your enjoyment at meeting them, or following up on their offer to share contacts, publications, potential collaborations etc.
- **Complete the post-meeting survey** This will be sent to all attendees by email. Your answers help us understand what you enjoyed and what improvements we can make to have the next year's meeting be even better.
- **How can I present next year?** The call for oral and poster abstract submissions will go out in July with a September deadline. Look for the announcement by email and on the Global Conservation Forum (ConsDistList).
- **Help make this guide better!** Was there something you wished that you'd known that was not mentioned in this guide? Please share it with Cory Rogge, AIC Vice-president, [crogge@menil.org](mailto:crogge@menil.org) and Ruth Seyler, AIC's Meetings & Advocacy Director, [rseyler@culturalheritage.org](mailto:rseyler@culturalheritage.org).



## **Additional resources**

Many other organizations and individuals have created helpful guides. Some of them may resonate more with you or offer additional insights and tips that will help. Enjoy!

[American Historical Association first time attendee guide](#)

[28 tips for attending an archaeological conference](#)

[American Alliance of Museums 10 tips for first-time annual meeting attendees](#)

[Ten simple rules for attending your first conference](#). This contains tips for virtual and in-person conferences and for both first time attendees and their mentors.

[How to make the most of an academic conference](#), Tomas Tobin, Sept. 20, 2021, Chronicle of Higher Education. If you are working for an institution, you may have institutional access, if not you may also register as an individual for limited access to articles including this one.