

What happens at Convention?

Camaraderie, Competition, Parties, Adventure and Fun! And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Imagine gathering anywhere from 100 to 500 passionate hockey fans from around the world in one place, at one time. There is no other fan gathering in the world quite like it. And it is so popular, that it's become a tradition that fans attend year after year.

From its humble beginnings, the NHL Booster Club convention began as a weekend gathering of friends and fans from a few Midwestern teams. Friendships grew as fast as the event, and soon it became obvious that three days was simply not enough. The convention has evolved over the years into a weeklong celebration of hockey, its fans, and the relationships that grow out of our mutual interests. Each year during the second week of August, hockey fans descend on a city to swap stories, renew acquaintances, explore local hospitality, share experiences from the past year and meet new friends. It has been called a group love-fest, a party, the greatest fan gathering on earth. We know it simply as convention.

Convention week typically begins the weekend before the actual convention. Host clubs organize a series of pre-convention activities highlighting their home cities. Every day during the week leading up to convention you'll have several trip options to choose from. They might include tours of the local area, a ball game, a theater show, trying your luck at a casino or rafting down a river. Convention attendees will trickle in throughout the week based on their personal schedules or the trips that interest them. Oftentimes, you'll notice a big surge in attendance by Wednesday night, traditionally the evening of the Pub Crawl, where hockey fans band together on the town and travel to various watering holes in search of adult refreshment. Pub Crawl has become one of the highlights of convention, and is an excellent opportunity to meet new friends in a convivial, group atmosphere.

By Friday, the trips begin to wind down but the energy reaches fever pitch as the convention itself begins. Typically, each convention features a theme, and Friday night's dinner brings it home through costume contests or events to put you in the spirit. Dancing and merriment continue through the night. By this time, you will have been introduced to another convention tradition -- hospitality rooms. Booster clubs from around the country will gather together to host themed party rooms where you can experience traditional team beverages and interact with fans from different teams in a less frenzied atmosphere.

Saturday morning features a breakfast with your new and old friends, and the start of the general meeting. At this time, each club gives a brief presentation about their activities over the past year. You learn what other clubs have done with charitable fundraising, road trips and special events. You'll also hear presentations describing upcoming conventions, which do nothing but build your excitement for next year.

Saturday afternoon, the bulk of the attendees relax or take a special tour of the area. A few representatives from each club, however, will attend the delegates meeting where they discuss issues facing the national organization and make plans for future conventions.

Saturday night, attendees gather for a traditional dinner and to hear the convention's keynote address. Host clubs bring in a variety of guest speakers from the hockey world to share stories and meet fans. In the past, NHL players, coaches, referees, broadcasters and league executives have all spoken to the convention. For the fans, it's an opportunity to meet the people you see or hear night after night. Alternatively, it's a chance to gain ammunition for the taunts you'll hurl next season when you see them on the ice.

A dance and hospitality rooms follow the dinner into the night. As attendees trail off into sleep, the hardier members of convention gather together to celebrate the longstanding tradition known as Survivors' Night. Dreading the end of convention and the prospect of waiting another year until seeing your friends again, survivors' night is an opportunity to stay up all night long with your friends playing games, watching movies and initiating first time conventioners into the convention

family. Becoming a "survivor" is something of a rite of passage within the convention community, and every attendee who survives until the morning receives a certificate.

Sunday morning's breakfast is usually strained with tearful goodbyes and promises to see each other next year. For survivors, it's also a chance to get some well-deserved sleep. Convention attendees will begin heading home Sunday and Monday with fond memories of the past week and fanciful dreams of next years' convention.

Beyond the trips and the parties, the most rewarding aspect of convention is undoubtedly the friendships you will make. Life-long friendships, and even romances have blossomed as a result of convention. Hockey fans are incredibly warm and welcoming, no matter how difficult that may be to believe during a playoff series. First time conventioneers, affectionately known as "rookies," will find themselves warmly welcomed and passed around convention as though they were family. After a little good-natured initiation, rookie conventioneers discover they return year after year.