

Navigating SCA Events – An Explanation

So you're thinking of attending your first SCA event. How exciting! Please feel free to use this helpful guide to navigate your way around. It's always more fun when you know what's going on!

What Cultures Are Included in the SCA?

The SCA was originally created primarily to cover Western European civilizations prior to the 17th century. However, folks now take a much wider view as they make exciting discoveries in the histories of cultures across the world that came into contact with Western Europe. Going to an event, you may see Russians, Persians, Mongols, Africans, Incas, Indians, and Koreans! All cultures, stretching west to Iceland, Greenland, and North and South America; east across Eastern Europe and Russia, through Turkey and the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, Mongolia, Korea, China, and Japan; and south through North Africa and the Sudan are included in the SCA!

Types of Events

In the SCA, there are several types of events:

TOURNEY or **DAY EVENT** – This is an event that happens all in one day, usually from about 10-6, sometimes with a feast afterwards. If you would just like a taste of what the SCA is all about to see if you like it, this is the type event you want to start off with. You will usually get to see some heavies and rapier fighting, sometimes also some archery and thrown weapons. Some day events will also feature classes for those who are not martially-inclined. To attend this, all you need to bring is yourself, some sunscreen, some water, and maybe a lunch as there are not always food vendors at this type of event. If you would prefer to pick up lunch at a restaurant or fast-food place during the event, please feel free! Your **SITE TOKEN** (see below) guarantees you re-entry to the event!

FEAST – This is a dining event, usually a dinner of several courses, all prepared in the medieval style of different regions and cultures. Culinary tastes have changed over the years, so this is a fantastic opportunity to try new dishes and food combinations! To attend this, all you need to bring is yourself and a basic place setting: plate, cup, bowl, flatware, and a napkin. Be prepared for a gastronomic extravaganza!

CROWN – This is a weekend-long fighting event, where Reigning Monarchs are decided. The SCA is broken down into regional chapters called Kingdoms, and within those Kingdoms some groups have chapters called "Principalities." The Kingdom of An Tir, to which the Barony of Dragon's Mist belongs, has two Principalities within its borders: The Summits and Tir Righ. Both Kingdoms and Principalities decide who will be their next Reigning Monarch through a **HEAVIES FIGHTING** competition – the last one standing gets to be King/Queen or Prince/Princess for the next six months! Regardless of gender expression, all are welcome to fight in the **CROWN TOURNAMENT**, and to fight for the one who inspires you the most! **KINGS/QUEENS, PRINCE/PRINCESSES**, and other Royal Representatives like **BARONS/BARONESSES** are recognizable because they wear a crown with an enameled coat of arms on the front. This coat of arms signifies the area they represent. If you see someone wearing a crown with an enameled coat of arms, it is polite to bow or curtsy to them. If it is the **KING/QUEEN**, you call them "Your Majesty." For the

PRINCE/PRINCESS, you call them, “Your Highness.” And for a **BARON/BARONESS**, you call them, “Your Excellency.” If you’re in doubt as to who you see, feel free to ask anyone nearby – they will be sure to tell you!

To attend this event, you will need to bring yourself, sunscreen, water, and maybe a lunch. Because this event goes over a weekend, there will usually be space for camping on-site (please see **WAR** below), or you are welcome to **DAY-TRIP** the event – spending the day at the event, but leaving for home in the late afternoon/evening, and returning the next day!

WAR – This is the SCA at its finest: an event spread over several days (usually held during a holiday weekend) where attendees are encouraged to camp to get the full experience. There is always fighting – **HEAVIES, RAPIER, ARCHERY, SEIGE and THROWN WEAPONS** – as well as many different types of classes, activities, and games. In addition there are usually merchants and vendors who are more than happy to help you spend your money! To attend this, you will need a tent and bedding, food and clothing for several days and a range of temperatures, sunscreen, toiletries, and a warm cloak or jacket for chilly nights. If you are just starting out in the SCA, this is probably a bit too advanced of an event to try out as your first.

Being At an Event

When you first arrive, you will see signs for something called **GATE**. In some areas of the country, you will also hear it referred to as **TROLL**. This is where you pay your entry fee (also called **SITE FEE**), sign waivers, and get your passes for the event. These passes are called **SITE TOKENS**, and instead of being just a boring old ticket, they will often be a fun little knickknack that you can take home as a souvenir. **GATE** will also have maps and information about the event, if you are looking for something in particular. When you pay your **SITE FEE** you may notice there is something called a **MEMBER DISCOUNT**. For \$45 annually, you can become an official member of the SCA. Not only does this entitle you to a discounted site fee, it gains you access to a number of educational publications, and is required if you decide to take on an administrative position with the club, wish to fight in Crown, or volunteer in certain areas of an event.

Once you are on site, you will probably want to look for the **CHATELAINE**, or **HOSPITALLER**, depending on your area of the country. This is a volunteer who works as a resource for newcomers like yourself. They can answer more in-depth questions than the folks at **GATE** can, and can help guide you to areas of the event you might be interested in seeing. In addition, the **CHATELAINE** normally has access to the **GOLD KEY** wardrobe, which is loaner clothing (we call it **GARB**), in a variety of sizes and styles, should you decide you would like to dress up!

Almost all events will feature an **OPENING AND CLOSING COURT**. The **OPENING COURT** happens at the beginning of the event; the **CLOSING COURT** happens at the end. This is where you get to see a lot of the pageantry and spectacle of the SCA. Depending on your area and the type of event, you may see **COURT** being led by the area’s **KING** and/or **QUEEN**, or perhaps the **PRINCE** and/or **PRINCESS**, or **BARON** and/or **BARONESS**. During **COURT** some administrative business is discussed, future events may be announced, and most importantly, **AWARDS** are given to folks whose skill deserves to be recognized. You may see someone become a **LORD** or **LADY**, or maybe even a **KNIGHT**!

During the event, you will probably see some fighting. There are several types of martial activities in the SCA: **HEAVIES** fighting, which is where you can see both men and women in armor fight each other with rattan weapons. We use rattan because it has a similar weight and handling as metal, but will not create the same types of injuries as metal weapons. Our fighters use strength and strategy in their fights – they hit each other at full speed, full power, and the fights are never, ever scripted!

RAPIER fighting features the sabers and foils of the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. While these fighters use actual, metal weapons, these blades are tipped to avoid injury. Again, these fights are unscripted, so the folks who are fighting must be cunning as well as strong!

ARCHERY and THROWN WEAPONS both feature skill at aiming and hitting targets. We don't use the fancy, compound bows popular in modern archery – our fighters hone their skill on bows more similar to the ones used in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

SEIGE WEAPONS feature almost exclusively at **WARS**. Folks build large-scale firing weapons like catapults, ballistas, and mangonels to fire projectiles. These projectiles are obviously rated for safety; however, it still looks impressive to see them at work!

BOFFERS is a fighting style taught to the children and youth in the SCA. Fighters use foam weapons and wear heavy protection to prevent injury. **BOFFER** fighting teaches children the moves one uses in **HEAVIES** fighting, but in a safe, monitored environment.

During an event, you may also have the opportunity to take part in a variety of classes or games. Please feel free to do so! SCA members love medieval history and are eager to share their knowledge with others.

We hope you have a marvelous time at your first event! And don't forget - If you have questions while at an event, don't be embarrassed to ask! The SCA is a volunteer organization and we are all happy to help explain what is going on, and what we are doing. And, especially, we hope that you enjoy yourself and want to make the SCA part of your life, as well!

Newcomers Academy

If you are interested in learning more about the SCA, the Barony of Dragon's Mist is proud to present our Newcomers Academy – held the first Friday of each month from January to June, the Newcomers Academy covers different aspects of the SCA to help newcomers become more familiar with everything the SCA has to offer. If you are interested in taking part, please contact our Chatelaine at chatelaine@dragonsmist.antir.sca.org, or check out the Dragon's Mist Facebook Group for more information. These classes are free and open to the public!