

Fannish Inquisition Survey: Spokane in 2015 Worldcon Bid

Worldcon Bid: [Spokane in 2015](#)

What are the proposed dates for which you are bidding? August 19-23, 2015

What is your proposed convention host city? Is your convention site in a city center location or a suburb? If a suburb, what are the transport options into the city center? How far is the site from the city center?

The convention will be held in Spokane, Washington. The Spokane Convention Center is on the south side of Riverfront Park in the center of Spokane, about a third of a mile west of Spokane City Hall and the Post Street shopping district.

What is the typical current airfare to your closest airport from world cities such as London, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Melbourne? Atlanta?

At this moment I see \$912 from London, \$391 from Boston, \$278 from Chicago, \$304 from Los Angeles, \$1364 from Melbourne, \$151 from Denver. From the east coast or Midwest (or from Europe), airfares to any major destination in the west (Seattle, Spokane, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, etc.) are all comparable, give or take up to \$70.

Do international flights, as well as domestic, fly into your local airport? Which airlines? If not, where is the closest international airport? Are direct flights from the cities above flown into your local airport?

Airlines flying into Spokane from major centers across the United States include United, Delta, Southwest, USAirways, Frontier, and Alaska Airlines. There are regional flights from Calgary and British Columbia and charter flights to Mexico. The nearest major international airport is Seattle. Most people flying from the eastern and central United States and from Europe are likely to connect via Denver, Minneapolis, San Francisco, or Phoenix. There are about eighty flights a day into Spokane from these hubs, so missing a connection means you can just get the next flight. There are direct flights (not nonstop, same plane but with a stop, usually in Denver) from Washington, Baltimore, and Greensboro on United, Delta, and Southwest.

How far is your convention site from the nearest airport/train station and what is the likely cost of getting to the hotels by both public transport and taxi from that airport/train station?

Spokane Airport is eight miles from the city center. Spokane's Transportation Plaza, serving Amtrak and local and regional bus services, is across the street from the Davenport Hotel, one of the convention hotels, about a five-minute walk from the convention center. If you like taking the train, you can get the Empire Builder train in Chicago (or coming the other way from Seattle or Portland). City bus fare, from the airport to any of the downtown hotels (connecting at the Transportation Plaza) is \$1.50. Taxi fare from the airport is about \$25. Some hotels, including the Doubletree, have a free airport shuttle.

What hotel(s) are being used for the convention? How many rooms, what type, accessibility issues, etc.?

Our closest hotels are the Doubletree, the Red Lion Inn at the Park, the Marriott Courtyard, and the Fairfield Inn, giving us 994 hotel rooms within 280 yards (a three-minute walk), plus the Red Lion River Inn and the Holiday Inn Express, giving us another 400 rooms within 400 yards (a five-minute walk). We are reserving additional rooms at the Ruby Hotel and the Davenport Hotel, about five blocks (800 yards, 0.4 miles) west of the convention site. All of downtown Spokane's hotels have either been extensively remodeled or built in the previous decade (the 2000's) in preparation for the 2007 US National Figure Skating Championship. We will set aside a block of rooms for people with mobility issues at the Doubletree Hotel, which is located between the exhibit hall and main convention center buildings.

What are your hotel room rates? Do these rates include breakfast? Do they include internet in the room? How firm are these rates?

- Doubletree: \$131
- Red Lion Inn at the Park: \$130
- Red Lion River Inn: \$120
- Marriott Courtyard: \$169
- Fairfield Inn: \$139 (inc. breakfast)
- Holiday Inn Express: \$125 (inc. breakfast)
- Davenport Hotel: \$139
- Quality Inn: \$119

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- Hotel Ruby: \$90
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All of downtown Spokane is a free wifi zone.

The rates listed are contracted, which is to say, they won't go up, but we are hoping to push one or two of these down as we get clarity on a couple of questions.

What is the cost to *park* at the convention/hotel facilities?

Parking underneath the Spokane convention center is \$10 per day. Parking at the street-level parking lot across the street (which is owned by the convention center) is \$5 per day.

What is the distance from the main hotel(s) to the closest entrance of the convention site? What are the transportation options for those who prefer not to walk or who have mobility difficulties?

Of the four main hotels:

- The Doubletree is connected by an interior tunnel to the Exhibit Hall and Convention Center building; it's about 50 yards from each building. (For comparison, this is about the distance across the Hyatt Regency Chicago skybridge between the two towers.)
- The Red Lion Inn at the Park is about 280 yards north of the Convention Center.
- The two Marriotts (Courtyard and Fairfield) are across the street from the Exhibit Hall (approx. 100 yards across the parking lots).

As we did during Cascadia Con, we will arrange a shuttle between the convention hotels and the convention center. As the walking paths are much more direct than the street route, we expect the shuttle to be used almost exclusively by people with mobility issues. Also, all Spokane city buses are wheelchair-accessible.

If using overflow hotels (or hotels not directly connected) what is the cost of a cab ride door-to-door with the convention center?

taxifarefinder.com estimates cab fare from the Davenport Hotel to the Convention Center at \$9.96, including tip, for an 8-minute cab ride.

Please describe your convention site facilities. For example, the quantity and sizes of rooms, tech options, accessibility issues, etc.

Spokane's convention site is comprised of three linked buildings. The Exhibit Hall to the east has over 100,000 square feet of exhibit space, next to a convenient loading dock (so one can drive up a ramp from street level onto the convention floor during setup).

The central Convention Center building has 25 function rooms of different sizes, including three 600-seat ballrooms (that could be combined if we had a reason to). All of the function rooms have audio pods installed in ceiling light fixtures, making it trivially easy to set up any room arrangement. The Convention Center includes a 270-seat theater with tiered seating suitable for concerts, science presentations, etc. This site includes an outdoor patio with a gorgeous view of the river, the park, and parts of the city, with a tent roof and environmental controls (mistifiers and space heaters). Smaller function rooms are on a second-level, available by escalators and elevators at the south and east ends. One major advantage is that most function rooms to be used for programming are within a few steps of the main lobby at the south end, such that the room-to-room walking distance is much shorter than at most other convention centers Worldcons have been at in recent years.

The Doubletree Hotel, between the Exhibit Hall and the Convention Center building, has another 20,000 square feet of function space, which we would be using for hospitality, all-hours programming, convention department offices (newsletter, operations, etc.).

West of the Convention Center building is the INB Performing Arts Center, described below.

The convention center contract rental is \$25,000 for all space, not quite free but still very cheap by Worldcon standards. (The city of Spokane pretty much sees the convention center as a loss leader for the tourism revenue that visitors bring.)

All of these buildings were built around 2006-2007 in time for the 2007 US National Figure Skating Championships. Another event hosted here was the Veterans' Wheelchair Games in 2009, with 500 athletes plus coaches, family, and other attendees; Spokane was chosen for its modern facilities.

For safety reasons (the lighting is very high up), tech setup on the Performing Arts Center stage is restricted to union-only staff. Across the rest of the site, we can use volunteers, third-party contractors, or whatever we want for transportation and setup; the convention center staff is happy to help us with whatever we might need from them.

Where will your large events (i.e. Hugo Ceremony and Masquerade) be held?

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The INB Performing Arts Center is a 2700-seat theater. This theater is often used to host touring Broadway shows and has Broadway-quality lighting and sound available. We intend to use this for main events, including the Hugo Awards Ceremony, Masquerade, and other events. (For example the Spokane Symphony Orchestra has expressed interest in performing a science-fiction themed concert.) A lot of the tech equipment (speakers, audio and lighting control boards, etc.) is in place, which will greatly reduce tech costs.

Please describe the restaurant scene near your site.

Spokane's restaurants range from diners to fine dining, from fast food to hand-made local fare. There is something for every taste, and every budget. Within reasonable walking distance of the Spokane Convention Center – what is considered the downtown core--there are 29 restaurants within two blocks, and over 120 restaurants within a 10-minute walk. Spokane is known for microbreweries, of which the one at the old Steam Plant is visually unique. Eastern Washington is also known for having excellent wineries; one can go on a tour of the wineries, or some of them have outlets in the city (within a few blocks of the convention center).

Drawing from inspiration around the globe, with Northwest hospitality and service, you will find everything from the familiar to the uniquely Northwest. One will find the whole spectrum of cuisines in Spokane, but themes that are a bit more prevalent here than elsewhere include Native American, German, Japanese, and some great seafood places, and some pioneer-decor places serving wild game dishes. Spokane is also a university town, so there are some quirky very-late-night places, as well as basic 24-hour fast food. The best places can be identified by the views they have of the Spokane Falls (the view from the balcony at Anthony's is amazing).

Spokane has more restaurants per capita than any other city in the United States. Urbanspoon's database lists establishments listed in the city of Spokane, with hundreds more in Spokane Valley and other communities across the county and metropolitan area, including Coeur d'Alene.

Please describe the policies / laws regarding smoking in your hotel(s), convention center, and city.

Washington state has some of the oldest and most progressive (aggressive?) anti-smoking laws in the United States. Smoking is prohibited in all restaurants and bars. No person may smoke in a public place or in any place of employment. The definition of "public place" includes bars, restaurants, bowling centers, skating rinks, and non-tribal casinos. The definition also includes private residences used to provide childcare, foster care, adult care, or similar social services, and at least 75 percent of the sleeping quarters within a hotel.

The Smoking in Public Places law also prohibits smoking within 25 feet of entrances, exits, windows that open, and ventilation intakes that serve enclosed areas where smoking is prohibited.

What type of weather can we expect at the time of year your convention is to be held?

The weather in Spokane is perfect in the summer: sunny and mild. The word "Spokane" in a Salish Indian language means "people of the sun". Average afternoon highs will be mid-to-low '80s; average evening temperatures get down to the '60s. Average afternoon humidity in mid-August is 28% (though if you want more you can stand on the walkway above the Spokane Falls). Local resident C.J. Cherryh says that even seeing clouds is unusual enough as to warrant conversation, so using sunblock is recommended.

What are some of the main tourist attractions of your city?

- Riverfront Park, in the center of Spokane, was the site of the 1974 World's Fair and today has many sites of interest to visitors. The Spokane Falls is the reason pioneers stopped to settle here, with the two waterfalls in a beautiful setting. The Centennial Trail, one of America's great walking and biking trails, runs behind the Convention Center and continues east into Idaho and Montana or west across the state to Puget Sound. The Pavilion, site of the US pavilion at the World's Fair, still has rides and concessions open in the summertime. There is some strange public art like the giant Radio Flyer wagon and the Bloomsday runners on the west side of the park, while walking east from the Convention Center one finds statues depicting the industrial and social history of Spokane, especially what was in the area before it was all cleaned up for the World's Fair.
- The historic Flour Mill on the north side of the river today houses a collection of unique restaurants and artisan craft shops.
- The Spokane Falls Skyride goes past the art deco City Hall, drops 200 feet to the Huntington Park Natural Area, crosses above the Spokane Falls, then under the historic Monroe Street Bridge, and finally returns to Riverfront Park.
- Cat Tales Zoological Park has dozens of wild cats including a lion, tigers, leopards, pumas, and bobcats, plus a couple of black bears. You can hand-feed a Bengal tiger, a Siberian white tiger, or a black bear. They have many assorted non-feline creatures living at Cat Tales as well. Most of the non-feline animals arrived as "orphans" and were taken in as part of the zoo's rescue program. Cat Tales also is the home of

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the Zoological Training Center, which is the only school of this type in North America. Students from all over the world come here to the Park to learn the profession of zookeeping.

- Manito Park is a collection of unique parks and gardens. The Nishinomiya Garden was established in 1974, with garden elements artistically placed in an asymmetric, strolling pond style, creating a beautiful garden in the Japanese tradition. This garden provides an intimate reminder of nature, inspiring tranquility, and peace. The Lilac Garden holds many varieties of rare and beautiful flowers, and gives Spokane the nickname of the "Lilac City".
- The Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture exhibits works of local artists and also plays host to travelling historical and cultural displays. The Museum also holds one of the largest collections of Native American ancient art in the state, and is worth the short walk from downtown.
- The cruises on Coeur d'Alene Lake, 25 minutes from downtown Spokane, offer a beautiful, serene view of the lake, with the northern Rocky Mountains on the eastern horizon.
- The Mobius Science Center is a new attraction in Spokane featuring exhibits on physics, acoustics, optics, engineering, biology, flight, chemistry, earth science, aerodynamics, robotics, geology, human anatomy and medicine, sports, technology, nature, and more, focusing on active, not passive participation, emphasizing inquiry, reflection, and multiple solutions.
- The Bing Crosby Theater has many performances by local and national theater groups, and has exhibits on the history of theater in the Northwest.
- The Steam Plant is an old steam plant converted into a microbrewery and shops. The dials, gauges, gears, and pipes are a favorite backdrop for local steampunk cosplayers. The restaurant has a lot of good choices, and the beer is decent too.
- The Arbor Crest Cliff House Estate is on a 450-foot cliff overlooking the city and countryside. This has been the site of many memorable public events, and also offers an interesting winery tour (with nice wines).
- Dishman Hills, just outside the Spokane city limits, is a convenient spot for rock-climbing enthusiasts.
- Riverside Park, twenty minutes from downtown, has even more beautiful barely-touched landscape. It is a great spot for birdwatching, canoeing, and has an even scarier cliff for rock-climbing if Dishman Hills isn't enough for one's adrenaline addiction.
- Art Galleries: Spokane's tolerant culture and beautiful geology, flora, and fauna has attracted a large community of artists, so the city has a vast, rich mix of museums and artistic attractions, and the eclectic scene should not be missed by any visitor that appreciates a little culture in an unexpected setting. Art lovers should visit one of the seven major local art galleries for a taste of resident talent and perhaps to purchase a one of a kind souvenir to hang on the wall at home.

Who is on your committee? Who is your bid chair? What experience do they have in general? In running this convention in particular?

Our core group is SWOC, the Seattle Westercon Organizing Committee, which has organized four Westercons and a NASFiC in the past couple of decades. The bid committee has expanded to include many Spokane-area fans, including three chairs of Spocon, the local SF convention. The other half of our group comes from around the world. Our advisers include three Worldcon chairs (Tom Veal, Christian McGuire, Robbie Bourget), three NASFiC chairs, six Westercon chairs, half a dozen others who have chaired local conventions, plus about ten who have been division head or deputy division head at Worldcons and many others who have been department heads and staff at Worldcons and NASFiCs; all of these and others on the committee have worked on local conventions in Seattle, Spokane, Vancouver, and elsewhere.

The Spokane in 2015 Worldcon Bid is a direct continuation of the organization that has also been the Seattle in 2002 Worldcon Bid, Cascadia Con, the Seattle in 2011 Worldcon Bid, and Westercon 65. Cascadia Con was a wonderful experience for our community that brought us together and gave our local fandom visibility to a wider fannish world, and we brought our group together again (on a smaller scale) for this year's Westercon. As there is no venue in the Seattle area currently suitable and available to host a Worldcon in the summer, we have chosen Spokane as the venue for the 2015 bid.

The bid chair is Alex von Thorn, whose main qualification is a willingness to travel to conventions and sit at bid tables. Alex's conrunning experience mainly involves programming, publications, publicity, and websites, basically any job that can be done sitting at a computer. His convention role is yet to be determined, but will likely include a communications responsibility, helping people with issues and questions contact the local or non-local experts and decision-makers who can respond to issues raised.

If known, who will be the chair of the convention? What experience do they have?

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Convention co-chairs will be Bobbie DuFault and Sally Woehrle. Bobbie and Sally have each chaired Westercons, and Bobbie was also chair of Cascadia Con, the 2005 NASFiC. Bobbie has years of Worldcon experience as division head, department head, and staff, while Sally has decades of experience as department head and staff. They have also worked on many local conventions including Norwescon, Rustycon, and others.

What arrangements will be made for evening socializing and party space? Do you have a corkage waiver?

We plan to use the Red Lion Inn at the Park as the party hotel, as it currently has the best array of suites. They have no restrictions on food or drink in hotel suites.

We are finalizing details regarding con suite and green room for the convention. The Convention Center offers space, for a fee; we are negotiating with the Doubletree for a possibly better arrangement.

Are you planning to have any membership discounts for certain groups, such as young adults, military, or seniors?

We will consider several discounted rates, mostly in line with the best practices of recent Worldcons, generally either addressing special cases (small number of memberships) or outreach (revenue we wouldn't see otherwise), so as not to distort rates for ordinary members. The discounts we are considering include:

- child memberships (6-16 years old)
- young adult memberships (7-21 years old)
- active (currently-serving) military (of any country), reflecting the difficulty these have in scheduling leave in advance
- staff (approved by division heads)
- dealers
- some sort of group or club discount, details yet to be determined
- at-the-door day memberships for Spokane County residents

Other than child and young-adult memberships, the discounted rates will not be set lower than the initial (Sept-Dec 2013) attending rate. Specific decisions about discounted rates will be made in consultation with budget and marketing teams (i.e. after becoming a seated convention).

Are you participating in pass-along funds?

Yes, we intend to participate in pass-along funds. We will also use budget best practices so that we expect to be neutral or slightly net positive on pass-along funds.