



Hamfests are a great place to finally meet the hams you've been talking to on the air. From left to right, Amy Herndon, AI6ZU; Randy Hall, K7AGE; Tyson Brooks, W7BL, and Jeri Ellsworth, AI6TK, enjoy some face-to-face time at 2019 SEA-PAC in Seaside, Oregon [Bob Inderbitzen, NQ1R, photo]

A hallmark of amateur radio networking is the hamfest. These events draw hundreds or thousands of radio amateurs that you can learn from, buy from, and meet one-on-one with. Some hamfests are organized by a single radio club and held in a church parking lot or grange hall. Others include the organizing power of a consortium of clubs and volunteers who can spread out their hamfest across a fairgrounds, or occupy a hotel or large convention center. Whether an event is larger or smaller, the reaction from anyone attending their first hamfest is usually the sheer delight of enjoying the company of so many other hams in one place. Here's what you can expect to find at a hamfest, and how to get the most out of it.

Most hamfests are organized to include one or more features that may include a swap meet or flea market and some equipment resellers. Add in a slate of seminars, exhibits, and demonstrations, and some hamfests take on the status of a convention or tradeshow.

**TIP** A quick search of the online ARRL Hamfest and Convention Database reveals that in recent years, more than 500 hamfests are held annually in the US. As we approach the new year, be sure to visit and return often to the database as organizers begin to populate the 2022 calendar with their hamfests.

### Be an Early Bird

Hamfest flea markets can include a treasure trove of used ham radio gear and accessories. But just like neighborhood garage sales on a Saturday morning, the best equipment and the best deals often go quickly. Get there when the flea market

## 2022 Hamfest Picks

We couldn't include them all, but here are some favorites:

**Orlando HamCation®**  
featuring the 2022 ARRL National Convention  
February 10-13, 2022  
Orlando, Florida  
This is the second largest annual hamfest in the US, and a great winter getaway.  
[hamcation.com](http://hamcation.com) and [arrl.org/expo](http://arrl.org/expo)

**QSO Today Virtual Ham Expo**  
March 12-13, 2022  
A fully interactive online convention.  
[qsoTodayHamExpo.com](http://qsoTodayHamExpo.com)

**Dayton Hamvention®**  
May 20-22, 2022  
Xenia, Ohio  
The world's largest amateur radio gathering.  
[hamvention.org](http://hamvention.org)

**SEA-PAC**  
June 3-5, 2022  
Seaside, Oregon  
Held at a convention center in a beautiful coastal town.  
[seapac.org](http://seapac.org)

**HAM RADIO**  
June 24-26, 2022  
Friedrichshafen, Germany  
Europe's biggest hamfest draws participants from 52 countries.  
[hamradio-friedrichshafen.com](http://hamradio-friedrichshafen.com)

**Huntsville Hamfest**  
August 20-21, 2022  
Huntsville, Alabama  
Their slogan: The World's Friendliest Hamfest!  
[hamfest.org](http://hamfest.org)

**Northeast HamXpostion**  
September 2022  
Marlborough, Massachusetts  
All proceeds go to a scholarship fund administered by the ARRL Foundation.  
[hamxposition.org](http://hamxposition.org)

**PacificonSM**  
October 2022  
San Ramon, California  
Hosts the annual ARRL Pacific Division Convention.  
[pacificon.org](http://pacificon.org)

opens, and come prepared by knowing what you're looking for; a handheld, HF transceiver, or some parts to build that next project. You may also find resellers carrying accessories, connectors, spools of wire, and more.

As amateur radio equipment is constantly evolving, there's a regular market for buying and selling gear at hamfests.

**TIP** A helpful resource to familiarize you with some of the recent but older model rigs is to search the QST Product Review archive — an ARRL members-only benefit. There you will find nearly every make and model of transceiver, as well as many accessories manufactured over the last 40 years. Each included product has been tested by the ARRL Lab and reviewed by experienced ARRL staff or members. For some extra help and advice, consider combing the flea market with a more knowledgeable ham friend. Watch for vintage gear. A classic Collins, Hallicrafters, or Heathkit rig can introduce a bit of radio nostalgia into your shack. Buy two or three though, and you're on the way to becoming a collector!

## Kick the Tires

Some of the larger hamfests and conventions will attract the major equipment manufacturers showing off the latest model gear. Since not everyone lives near a ham radio retailer, this may be your best opportunity to see some new gear up close. It's a relatively small market where reputation and customer loyalty are highly sought and valued. Take the time to speak with the sales representatives, most of whom are also hams, and ask questions. This is another place where your research of more recent QST Product Reviews will help you narrow down the features and specifications to look for in a radio, as well as help you compare multiple models that interest you.

Ready to buy? While a few manufacturers sell direct, some hamfests attract equipment dealers that will set up a store or counter on the exhibit floor, stocked with the best-selling amateur radio gear, parts, and accessories.

**TIP** Before a hamfest, visit the websites of manufacturers and dealers. Compare pricing, look for special offers, and sign up for coupons.

## Forums and Learning

Many hamfests publish their event details online. If they have organized speakers and forums, jot down the times and locations for topics that interest you. A trend for some larger conventions is to offer all-day workshops on Thursday or Friday, preceding the rest of the hamfest. Popular workshops include antenna seminars, emergency communications training, new ham seminars, and project building.

Attending a handful of 45-minute forums is another great way to pick up some tips, instruction, or to be inspired to try something new. Young attendees should watch for increasingly popular presentations and panels featuring other active youth.

Demonstrations are another way hams share their enthusiasm and knowledge at hamfests. Examples include balloon launches with wireless payloads, tracking satellites with a handheld antenna, hidden transmitter hunts, and remote station demos.

## Get There

Hamfests are fun! Plan to get to the regional hamfests near you, but also consider traveling to the larger annually held conventions. Orlando HamCation® in February and Dayton Hamvention® in May are among the biggest of these, but there are plenty of others too. So grab your engraved call sign badge and embroidered hat and get to a hamfest!

Evan Vander Stoep, KJ7BRE, shows off the portable amateur radio go-box he configured at 2019 SEA-PAC in Seaside, Oregon. [Bob Inderbitzen, NQ1R, photo]

