CES Survival Guide

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Every year, there’s one convention that unites geeks, technophiles, engineers, and techies of all stripes—the Consumer Electronics Show. Quite simply, it’s the geek mecca. Each year, over 100,000 attendees make the annual pilgrimage to Las Vegas for 3-6 days of flashy lights, spiffy new tech, and booth babes. Yet for the newbie, CES can be overwhelming…it's like visiting New York, London, or Paris for the first time. If you want to maximize your experience, you’ll need a plan, a guide, and a comfortable pair of shoes. I can’t buy your shoes or create your schedule, but I *can* be your guide.

1) First off, **dress for success!** In other words, **wear a comfortable pair of shoes!** The Las Vegas Convention Center [1] is 3,200,000 sq. ft. and you’ll often be traveling from one end to another. If you wear uncomfortable dress shoes, you’ll be in pain. *Lots* of pain. And by the end, you’ll have calluses the size of a beach ball. I made the mistake of wearing unsupportive dress shoes to a much smaller convention and paid the price.

I would highly recommend sneakers or walking shoes, as these provide the most support. If not, find a comfortable pair of dress shoes—Rockports or Eccos, among others.

View from the South Hall. This is only a tiny fraction of it, and there are three of these suckers!

2) **Bring water or some other hydration source.** This ties into #1. With all the walking you'll be doing (unless you're an exhibitor fixed in place), you'll get tons of exercise. As with any form of PT (physical training), it helps to stay hydrated. As a corollary, I'd recommend **bringing a comfortable backpack.** And if you're press, don't rely on the free CES laptop bag. While it works in a pinch, the shoulder bag isn't ideal for carrying all day, especially if you're toting a laptop. Pick a comfortable backpack with shock-absorbing straps and lumbar support. Make sure it has compartments for bottles. It's worth shelling out the extra dough for a comfortable bag if it saves your back and/or shoulders.

3) **Get lots of sleep!** This is, after all, Las Vegas, so you may be tempted to crash the parties, hit the strip, and stay up all night. I'd highly recommend against this. After a day on the show floor, you need to recharge your batteries. Enjoy yourself! Vegas is loads of fun. But I wouldn't recommend staying out till the wee hours of the morning. Think of it this way—you wouldn't stay up partying on a normal week day (or most of us wouldn't, anyway). Why do it for CES? Lest we forget, most of us still have a job to do in Vegas.

4) **Make a plan.** You won't see everything your first time. I guarantee it. It'd take a month to see everything at CES. But it still helps to have a plan. I'd highly

recommend downloading the 2011 CES app. Among other things, it provides a list of exhibitors, a map (which first-timers desperately need), and a personal scheduler. If possible, plan your route by day. The Las Vegas Convention Center is divided into three halls—North, South, and Central, and each contains plenty to see! There's also The Venetian for press conferences and The Hilton for keynotes. The Hilton is next to the LVCC, but it's still quite a hike to go from the South Hall to the Hilton (believe me, I've tried).

5) **Give yourself at least a day to explore.** You'll have a busy schedule, but you'll want to make time to see the show floor. There's lots to see, and half the fun of CES is checking out the gargantuan booths [2], the occasional celebrity (Stan Lee [3] made an appearance last year), and all the cool gadgets, gizmos, and technology.

Samsung always has a gigantic booth.

6) **Have fun!** Above all, make sure to have lots of fun! Las Vegas is a truly unique city, and CES is an experience unlike any other, so enjoy yourself! Check out the strip, hit the casinos, see the sights, and have fun! If you're looking for quality dining, Circus Circus has one of the best steakhouses in town. The Bellagio also hosts a fabulous buffet.

Enjoy, and be sure to check out ECN's coverage of the 2011 International Consumer Electronics Show here [4].

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