An Insider's Guide to the Tucson Festival of Books

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With 36 venues, 360 author presentations and a multitude of panel discussions, exhibits and workshops, figuring out what to do and see at the Tucson Festival of Books might seem daunting.

Maybe some tips from an expert would help?

To help you get the most out of Tucson's signature literary event — now in its 11th year — we asked Melanie Morgan, the festival's executive director, for tools and tips that will make your festival-going experience as awesome as it can be.

Below, read Morgan's advice for preparing for the festival, timing your visit, picking the best events for children, and more.

Preparing and getting around

As you plan your visit to the festival, Morgan recommends scanning the presenting author schedule on the festival website. There, visitors can select the events they're interested in by clicking the stars on the schedule. Then, the "bookmarked events" page will show a printable listing of those selected events in chronological order.

Morgan also recommends downloading the Tucson Festival of Books app, which can be a valuable resource for attendees once they're at the festival. It offers not only a map, but also a complete schedule of festival events, a "my calendar" feature to flag events for quick reference later, and menus for food vendors. The app also has information about presenting authors, and when and where they will speak.

"I just think it's an unbelievably user-friendly way to navigate the festival," Morgan says.

For attendees who want to avoid the festival's busiest hours, Morgan says Sunday morning and late Sunday afternoon tend to be less crowded.

Morgan also recommends leaving dogs at home, unless they are service animals.

Bringing children? Don't miss these

If you'll have your kids in tow, Morgan recommends checking out the area between the College of Education and the UA Mall, which will be packed with children's activities and events. Those include children's book sales and signings, talks by young adult and children's book authors, as well as author-led workshops for children on writing and illustrating.

Morgan also recommends Science City, a destination in itself, which offers interactive events, exhibits and presentations sponsored by the UA College of Science and the BIOS5 Institute.
Science City's Science Stage, at the east end of the Mall, will feature presentations on black holes, Pluto, Native American petroglyphs, medicine and more. The area includes six "neighborhoods," where visitors can explore science in art, food and other facets of life.

**See the UA's wonders**

Morgan also recommends checking out the tours and open houses at many UA labs, museums and other facilities. These events, offered as part of Science City, allow visitors to see areas that are not often open to the public, or to see UA attractions at discounted prices. Those include:

- The Richard F. Caris Mirror Lab will hold open houses on both days of the festival. There, visitors will see how the largest mirrors in the world are built for telescopes.
- Open houses at the Flandrau Science Center and Planetarium run both days of the festival from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Admission into the center is free, and planetarium shows are $4.
- The Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research will hold an open house on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- The National Optical Astronomy Observatory will hold open houses from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. both days of the festival.
- Visitors can go behind the scenes at the Arizona State Museum during an open house from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday.
- Tours of the UA Insect Collection will run throughout Saturday, allowing visitors an inside look at the state's largest collection of insects, which includes more than 2 million specimens.

For a full list of open houses and tours, visit the Science City website.

**Disability-related accommodations**

Festival organizers work with the UA Disability Resource Center to ensure the festival is as accessible as possible for all attendees, Morgan says. The festival website provides information about disability access and how to request accommodations.

Wheelchairs and motorized scooters are available to rent but should be reserved ahead of time, Morgan says. Reservations can be made with Metro Med by calling 520-323-9500. Reserved equipment can be picked up at Sabor, a restaurant on the main level of the Student Union Memorial Center.

For those who need a sign language interpreter, making a request before the festival through a form on the DRC website is the best way to ensure one will be available. Interpreters will be available on limited basis during the festival, and can be requested by visiting one of the festival's four information booths along the Mall. The festival map indicates the booths with a question mark symbol.

Assistive listening devices will be available in many of the presentation venues, but requests for devices at particular venues can be made before the festival by using this form.

**Parking/getting to the festival**

Though Second Street Garage is the closest to the festival, that garage will be reserved for authors and festival sponsors. Parking at the Park Avenue and Highland Avenue garages is
free; parking at all other campus garages is $5.

Zone 1 parking [24], which includes lots north of Speedway Boulevard on the UA Health Sciences campus, are open to festival-goers. Many Zone 1 lots are also located along the Sun Link [22] streetcar route, making the streetcar a good resource, Morgan says.

Visit the DRC website for a map of accessible parking on campus [23]. A UA disability permit, which is typically required to park in disability spaces around campus, is not required to park in such spaces during the festival for those who have a state-issued disability placard, Morgan says.

**Don't despair if the weather is bad**

Though the forecast calls for temperatures in the 70s with no sign of rain, don't let poor weather put a damper on your festival experience, Morgan says. She notes that most author presentations, panels and talks are held indoors or in large tents on the Mall.

"Bring an umbrella, wear a pair of warm socks and come anyway," Morgan says.

**How to get help at the festival**

Anyone in need of general festival information can get help from attendants at one of the four information booths along the Mall. Booths are marked on the festival map [20] with a question mark. Other booths, marked on the map with a first-aid symbol, also will provide medical assistance.

Over the course of the weekend, a few thousand volunteers will be on hand to help answer questions, Morgan says. Volunteers will be wearing bright orange T-shirts bearing the Tucson Festival of Books logo.

*For more information about the Tucson Festival of Books, see this special section [24] in the Arizona Daily Star.*
[22] https://www.sunlinkstreetcar.com/