

RiverBender Blog: A Day of the Odd and the Curious at an STL Expo

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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This past weekend, I found myself at the St. Louis Oddities and Curiosities Expo. Despite the name, I still was unprepared for the absolutely wild experience that this would prove to be.

My friends and I agreed to go to the expo a few weeks ago. While none of us were interested in the more, uh, *unique* aspects of the event — taxidermy class, anyone? — we were all intrigued by the idea of seeing something really weird, whatever that might be. And so we loaded into my car and set off for the city, ready for a day of oddities and curiosities galore.

The first test was actually getting to the expo. I love St. Louis; I hate driving in St. Louis. My friend, who had been granted aux cord permissions, put on some calming music while I circled the venue, looking for a parking space. Twenty minutes and three circles later, we bit the bullet and forked out \$30 to park in a nearby parking garage.

On a quick side note, I am not a good driver. I don't know why my friends let me drive in the city. Once, I drove through downtown Chicago, and while I survived this trip, I think I took on permanent psychic damage from the pure anxiety of the experience. While downtown St. Louis is very different from downtown Chicago, I'm still hit by dread every time I have to navigate it. We made it to the expo, but as I tried to discreetly calm my nerves, I couldn't help but wonder, at what cost? (\$30, apparently.)

But we were in high spirits! We had a strange day ahead of us!

The convention center was wildly crowded. In one hall was the expo; in the other was a cheerleading competition. My friends and I exchanged raised eyebrows and then followed the crowd that was dressed in the odd-and-curious fashion. (Think goth, weird t-shirts, dyed hair, corsets, long black skirts, tattoos. In other words, my people.)

And then, we were there. The expo, filled to the brim with tarot cards, horror memorabilia, crystals, skulls, bloody art prints, spooky figurines. [Thomas Nealeigh with FreakShow Deluxe](#) was in the corner, swallowing swords and showing off his circus tricks. The taxidermy class, full of people braver than I, was in full swing off to the side.

My friends and I glanced at each other, then back at the convention hall. This was weird as hell, and we loved it.

We spent the rest of the day going from booth to booth, studying the artistry in every item. Say what you will about these weird crafts, but you have to admire the creativity and the skill. I bought a ring shaped like an eyeball and was delighted.

Throughout the day, I couldn't help but think about the #KeepAltonWeird movement. I was enjoying my day in St. Louis, but there are a lot of cool things happening right here in the Riverbend. We're lucky that we're so close to a big city so we can take advantage of experiences like this, just like we're lucky to live in a place where art, strangeness and community are celebrated in the Riverbend.

The Oddities and Curiosities Expo was part of my "say yes" mantra for the year, and I have to say, it sure is fun having these weird days with my friends. But I'm happy to be back home where I can experience the weird and the wonderful all the time, no city traffic required.