

Merchant Office S.O.P

On going:

Maintain and add to the database of merchant information.

Answer emails from merchants, shoppers, and staff promptly.

At least 8 months before:

Update merchant packet with current Gulf Wars number, dates, and contact information. Add or clarify rules if necessary.

Ask Autocrat of any upcoming changes (i.e. opening date time changes)

At least 7 months before:

Send merchant application link to Web Administer to add to website.

Post merchant application link to Facebook merchants of Gulf Wars group.

Make a shared database for the paypal deputy with merchant contact information and amount due. Breakdown refundable/nonrefundable fees.

Review merchant application to be sure it has all the necessary information. When possible compare it to last year's information. It is a very common mistake for the merchant to add the rope distance to only one side of his/her tent. Look at last year's Gulf War notes, make sure any issues have been addressed and corrected.

A few months before the war

Order any items that need to be made and shipped, ie parking signs.

Parking signs need to be replaced every 4 or 5 years as they seem to get beaten down by the weather and people driving over them.

At least one month before the site booklet deadline:

Merchant applications must be paid by Nov 19th. After this deadline, a \$25 late fee and no guarantee of a space, to be on the map, or included in the site booklet.

Work on merchant map keeping in mind who wants what and what is best for the whole.

Contact site owner with food vendor information: who, menu, prices and electrical needs.

Third week of January:

Upload map with space numbers and merchant names, merchant contact sheet, and merchant category list for the site booklet to the facebook group, or send it where requested.

Send Web Administer the new map to update the web site.

Email merchant acceptance letters.

Contact set up and gate crew to check if they are still committed to helping.

If Gulf Wars exchequer hasn't contacted about the tax permit for Gulf Wars, remind him/her.

Two to three Weeks before the war:

Email merchants, ask for any merchant helper updates and send reminder about check in procedures.

Make sure sales tax permit has been received.

At least a week before the war:

Post to merchant of Gulf Wars facebook group a reminder about check in procedures. Remind merchants of merchantcrat's contact information.

Purchase needed supplies: Ant poison, receipt booklets, paint, flag markers, trash bags, wide clear tape, paper, ink, pens, etc.

Fire ants will plague us throughout the war. The merchant office buys both kinds of killer, one to apply dry, and one that is applied wet to concur with weather conditions.

Review and calculate how many parking spaces we may need from the information merchants entered in their application. Add at least four the total for oops factors.

Print merchant welcome letters with helpful information, such as tax calculations.
Print large maps for space layout crew, merchant office, and information spots.
Print merchant list for merchant office.
Print list of merchants and helpers for front gate guard for early arrivals.

Contact (again) set up and gate crew to check if they are still committed to helping.

Merchants who want to arrive early are a good source of set up volunteers. Merchants (and previous merchants) who are local to the area are also a wonderful source! (Darkwood Armoury and Ivar) Retired friends also make good early on crew ☺.

Wednesday before the war:

Go to on site storage and pick up merchant totes, signs, loppers.

Get with site owner, or long time worker, and make sure the main waterline through the food court area is properly marked.

Test electrical outlets if there are any problems, check breakers, if that is not the problem, bring it to site owner's attention.

Measure out merchant spaces: You will need a 5 person crew, the large merchant map, and 2 tape measures. With the 2 tape measures and 3 people make an "L" measuring frontage and depth at the same time. Have a 4th person placing the space number and flags to mark the merchant areas. The Merchantcrat should be supervising this operation so there is no misinterpretation of the map. The crew does not like to redo their work, which seems to always happen when left on their own. It is very important to remind them that the roads curve. The 5th crew member should be on brush trimming and fire ant eradication duty.

Food merchants may arrive to start setting up so they have time to be inspected by the health department.

Try and coordinate arrival of rental tents, else mark ground with a lot of instructions (front, corners, name of merchant).

All day offer crew water, remind them about sun tan lotion and lip balm.

Thursday before the war:

Lay out merchant parking lot. Start with measuring distance from large tree so it doesn't end up in the road way. Run a 300 ft tape down the length of the parking row, measure the row depth with another shorter tape, walk that tape down keeping the distance from the first tape while laying the third tape parallel to tape 1. Place flags at indicated measurements (see parking attachment *needs slight adjustment to drawing because of fence changes) Have two people stand on a piece of rope to form a line for the line painter to follow. 4th person paints space

numbers. Put out merchant parking signs. Merchantcrat (or someone who has done this a number of times) will make sure they are doing it all as planned.

Typically we have rows A-F each space can park a vehicle and trailer as a pull through at a 52.5 degree angle. Approximately 18-20 spaces per row as some rows have trees. Row F has wider spaces for larger box trucks.

Try and coordinate arrival of rental tents, else mark ground with a lot of instructions (front, corners, name of merchant).

All day offer crew water, remind them about sun tan lotion and lip balm.

Rental tents will arrive some time during the day. Merchants renting tents should have sent the Merchant office their rental details, ie: tent size, tables, and chairs. It is very important that the Merchantcrat, or someone that has complete understanding of where and how the rental tents are to be set up is overseeing this part of the set up. Do not leave telling the rental company people setting the tents up “to put it here between these four clearly marked flags or painted lines or string”, if you are not watching they will put it up two feet the wrong direction or at an angle, or some other annoying way; which will bother the merchants next to them if you let the rental company leave it that way. Also check the tent for holes larger than a pin prick as it will drip or rain and the merchant will complain. A bit of duck tape applied early will save everyone headaches later.

Deputy will oversee that the Merchant office gets set up, this includes wall, tables, chairs, electric line and multiple plug receptor.

Send a crew member to look again for fire ants that were missed or moved, attempt to kill them.

As soon as the Merchant office is up, two crew members will go back out to the parking lot and trim low hanging branches and brush under trees. If possible they will fill in any “road hazard” holes. .

Friday early-on:

Get golf cart and radio as soon as possible, this is the busiest day for the Merchant office.

Review all lists, merchant early on... any last minute phone calls with merchant helper changes that may need to be added. Merchant parking tags with spaces and spread sheet. Merchant spaces with sizes and maps.

Give Danny (or gate guard) list of merchants for early on, merchant name alphabetized with legal names of merchant and helpers.

10:00 AM

Have merchant area crew assemble. They are going out to check space numbers and flags are still in place. Sometimes these get driven over, the dogs pull a few flags out, these need to be reset or replaced. Have someone hunt and poison any fire ant mounds still active.

11:00 AM

Have Merchant staff meet and go over check in procedures. There will be 2 Merchant staff members in the office from noon to 7 PM in three and half hour shifts on Friday and Saturday, and one (possibly two depending on the number of arrivals on Saturday... weather delays) on Sunday from open to 7:00 PM , in 3 hour shifts. The shifts should overlap by ½ hour unless the replacement has done the job before.

Noon

Two merchant staff will check merchants in as they arrive and collect electric fee and any other monies owed. They should issue a receipt. Have merchant office staff equipped with: merchant map, spreadsheet with space numbers and merchant name, early-on spread sheet, welcome letter, pens, paper, highlighters, and Merchantcrat's cell phone number.

Merchant staff will be located throughout the merchant area and should wear the merchant staff baldric so merchants may identify them.

Have merchant check in helpers in merchant office with: merchant map, merchant parking space map, spreadsheet with space numbers and merchant name, early-on spread sheet, welcome letter, pens, paper, highlighters, and Merchantcrat's cell phone number.

Merchant check in procedures:

The primary merchant should check in with the merchant staff at the merchant office. They will be given their welcome letter that includes tax information. Merchant staff should collect any fees owed (this is usually electric charges, last minute wait listed merchants, and folks who were a few dollars off in their fee calculations- probably because they forgot the ropes on one side) and issue a receipt. The merchant will be given a temporary parking tag with the date and hour they arrived. Merchants are expected to unload and move their vehicles to parking as soon as possible. We do not expect them to move their vehicles at night, but will need to first thing in the morning. Merchants who are taking an excessive time to get their vehicle to merchant parking will be "checked on" and encouraged to get their vehicle moved.

Merchants start checking in, most issues will be:

They think their space is too small Have spreadsheet with their applications in it in golf cart along with a tape measure. They may have put the short side as their frontage, they need to turn their tent 90 degrees. They forgot their ropes, see if they can cross with neighbors. They brought a different tent, see if you can move the row down some or move them to another spot.

They wanted electric, they didn't get it. Electric is limited and some spaces do not have access to it. They will receive an email it is available to them along with a map so they can figure out approximately how much extension cord they will need to reach it. If they do not have access, they can recharge cell phones and batteries at the merchant office.

They only got one merchant parking tag, there are two merchants in the booth. The parking space is for whoever registered as the merchant, if they want two, they need to register as two merchants in the same space. They are told this up front, but think if they ask the Merchantcrat it will change.

There are fire ants in their space. Most know to find Cynric, but if they can't or are new, will ask any of the Merchant staff, we'll send him.

Questions answered in the merchant packet. Answer the first two, on the third smile and hand them a copy of the merchant packet, they just want to talk, go help someone who really needs you.

Merchant on waiting list needs to know where to set up. When possible call or email them with a space number of a cancellation ahead of time. If the spaces left open are open because they don't have good drainage, or are in a low traffic area, let the merchant know the pros and cons and show him the spot and let him decide.

Merchant has helpers not on the early-on list. Have them wait until the Merchantcrat is contacted. Is the primary merchant with them? If not, they will need to wait until the primary merchant is found and their help is confirmed along with the burning question as to why their names were not given to the Merchantcrat. Confirm with troll that they are preregistered. If they are add them to the early on list. If not, they need to come back when troll is set up to receive funds. (Saturday)

Arriving late. Vehicle problems along with road conditions plague merchants a half dozen will call and say they will be arriving late. Some will say they will be there the next day. Some will just be a bit late; if it is just a little past 6:00 PM arrange with gate. If past 7:00 PM advice to get a hotel, check in closed at 6PM, it is dark and there is no one there to check them in.

6PM go quickly to staff meeting... takes long because merchants want to say hi.

After Meeting

Thank merchant staff. Review merchant list as to who has checked in. Resolve any new issues. Have some laughs with friends.

All day Friday (and Saturday):

Check in with Merchant staff through out the day to keep current with any issues. Most of them are just FYIs. Many issues are taken care of by merchants working it out between themselves and they just tell you what happened. Most of this will be space related issues. Next is “Can I leave _____ like this until tomorrow morning?” The answer is yes, if it’s not endangering anyone/thing, and it doesn’t bother your neighbors.

Start reminding merchants to move their vehicles to parking.

Merchant Parking

Staffed: Friday 1PM to 6 PM Saturday 10AM to 6PM

Have merchant parking staffed with 2 people. Staff will assign spaces. Merchant will give merchant parking staff their temporary parking tag in exchange for a new orange tag and an assigned parking spot. Part of the last row in merchant parking is made longer and wider for big box trucks and trailers. Save at least 8 spaces close to the front for merchants with mobility issues. Mark 3 or 4 “oops” spots so merchants have some place to park when someone (usually someone from general parking) parks in their spot.

Stickers for tags are pre printed with Merchant name, booth number, contact person and cell phone. Stickers with space numbers are preprinted. Merchant parking staff should also fill in spread sheet with who is assigned to what spot. Merchant parking issued radio, returns it to merchant office when shift over. If merchant is not parked by 6 PM on Saturday, they must go to the merchant office for a parking tag and space.

Saturday 9 AM to Noon or Friday evening if available.

Get staff and merchants who arrived Friday to go back to gate to troll in. (I REALLY HOPE THIS CHANGES IN THE FUTURE... SENDING IDEAS TO AUTOCRAT AND TROLL) I would prefer to troll preregistered merchants in at the same time they arrive on Friday and check in with the merchant office.

Saturday 1PM to 6:00 PM

More merchants arrive see early on Friday for procedures

Saturday 6 PM to Sunday 10AM

Put sign on merchant office door “CLOSED text Seraphina (merchantrcat) at 210 287-3275. Do NOT call or text 11 PM to 7 AM unless it is an emergency. Do not set up your merchant tent without checking in, there may be changes.”

Saturday Before 6:00 PM

Have golf cart checked, thank the mechanic.
Change battery on radio

Monday

Collect any extra monies due and give the merchant a receipt and give the monies to appropriate people. This is usually electric charges, last minute wait listed merchants, and folks who were a few dollars off in their fee calculations- probably because they forgot the ropes on one side. Electric fees go to the site owner, merchant fees to the exchequer.

Check merchant parking, save a spot for any merchants arriving today. Keep the few oops spaces and give anything left to general parking (usually 0 to 6 spaces)

1st Saturday – 2nd Saturday

Daily: Change radio batteries at watch. Have golf cart checked. Fill out volunteer rooster and turn in.

Have merchant office staffed with at least one person from 10 AM to 6 PM preferably in 2 or 3 hour shifts daily. Have staff or deputy walking the merchant area during these hours so merchants have a chance to talk to the staff if they are “stuck” at their booth.

At least once a day have a merchant staff member check merchant parking. Some people in still can't tell that their parking tag is different and they aren't merchants. Text unauthorized vehicles that they need to move out of merchant parking.

Handle any issues that come up in the merchant area. Some will be site issues. Most will be about vehicles. Remind folks along Queens Hwy, and the foodcourt they need to move their vehicles. One parked car, another sees it, then there are eight before you know it. Make note of any problems.

Deliveries should come to the merchant, let merchants know when their packages arrive. Most merchants will tell the Merchant office in advance they are waiting on a delivery.

******Sometime during the week**** help volunteer point collect donations from merchants (this goes on their volunteer hour sheet)**

Wednesday

Moonlight madness, merchant stay open until at least 10:00 PM, so does the Merchant office. Coordinate with watch for extra foot patrol tonight. Take pictures of merchant area during the day. This will help next year in planning the merchant area. It also shows who has a great set up and should be encouraged to come back. Merchants may close for up to 3 hours during the day, but must reopen by 7 PM. Have at least 3 staff members roam the merchant area during midnight madness. Remind merchants no open flames. They tend to forget during MM when this can be most hazardous.

Friday

Tomorrow is tax day, the state requires us to collect sales tax and send it in to them. (We have 10 days to turn it into the state) Merchant staff will remind merchants they can pay at the Merchant office or when the golf cart comes by. Have Merchant staff write out what can be pre written on the tax receipt to make the collection process faster. Also remind merchants no vehicles in the merchant area until after 3PM on Saturday. They can sell until 3PM on Saturday, even after they turn in their taxes.

Saturday

In the morning have a staff member go to merchant parking and pull the orange flags.

Assemble merchant staff (Merchantcrat plus 4-9 others) by 11:30 AM. Go over tax calculations. Assign two - four to the golf cart, and two - four to the office. Give each team a receipt booklet, calculator, extra envelopes, clip board, pens, merchant list (to check off) and a bags to put the collected taxes in. At noon the tax collection begins. At 3:00 PM it ends. Every merchant must turn in taxes with the state tax form. The staff on the golf cart will be in sets of two. Two people must count and verify the taxes. One will give a receipt. Two people must be with the money at all times. The money should never be left with just one person EVER. They will drop off collected taxes at the Merchant office every hour. The Merchant office will also be collecting taxes and hearing suggestions, complements and merchant gossip. Tax calculation will be verified, monies counted by both staff members and both will initial the sealed envelope. Remind merchant to take a photo of the tax form for their records and with a receipt.

After 3:00 PM

As soon as possible hand the taxes over to the exchequer.

Start pre packing the Merchant office.

Return tables and chairs to Bede hall.

Thank Merchant staff.

Sunday

Go to staff meeting @ 9AM.

Collect signs, pull up and box up extension cords, pack up items for storage,

return items to storage. Encourage merchants to be off site before noon. Make note of those who aren't off site by 12:00 PM.

Items for storage: signs, loopers, totes containing: ant poison, tape measures, extension cords, paint, and left behind volunteer raffle signs.

Standard rules for merchants:

If anyone is not following the rules (to follow) plus the site rules, the merchant staff will politely remind them of the rule. When possible offer suggestions, or help to rectify the situation. Usually it's very simple, and the merchant just hadn't gotten to it yet, then forgot. Occasionally there is someone Who thinks they are special. Explain the "why of" or reason for the rule, when they understand, they are fine with complying. The following are the rules from GW XXXII, these are standard with the dates and war number changing yearly

NOTE : extended Nov 19th to Dec 19th for delay in paypal use verification.

Gulf Wars RULES FOR MERCHANTS

SITE RULES FOR MERCHANTS

Participation as a merchant constitutes agreement with the published rules and regulations. By registering to merchant at Gulf Wars XXXII all merchants, their agents, employees and affiliates agree to abide by all the rules and regulations of the State of Mississippi, The Society for Creative Anachronism Inc., King's Arrow Ranch, and the Autocrat/Merchant Staff of Gulf Wars XXXII. Merchants are responsible for acquainting themselves and their staff with these rules and standards - ignorance is not an excuse.

All the rules that apply for Gulf Wars in general also apply to Merchants (merchants are responsible for acquainting themselves with SCA rules and standards - ignorance is not an excuse.)

SIGNS FOR YOUR SHOP

Every merchant MUST have a sign that is visible as people walk around the marketplace. Note: The Merchant Staff and Autocrat reserve the right to reject offensive business names.

DRESS CODE

All merchants must conform to acceptable SCA standards of dress. Garb must be worn at all times from 3 P.M. Saturday, March 11th through the end of business Saturday, March 18th.

NOTE: This means Medieval/Renaissance clothing, not fantasy garb. Modern clothing may not be worn at Gulf Wars. You must wear garb while on site/anywhere at the war, not just the marketplace.

APPROPRIATE MERCHANDISE

As Gulf Wars is a family event, merchandise inappropriate to a family situation should not be displayed. This is Medieval reenactment, NOT fantasy, science fiction, or post-1600 CE time period. Remember this in your merchandise selection. Modern clothing with SCA-theme artwork should be displayed folded, not hanging.

PERIOD, OR PERIOD-APPEARING TENTS ARE REQUIRED.

It may rain! It may flood! Come prepared! All modern-looking items such as modern tables, chairs, plastic tubs, shelving units, etc. must be covered. Items visible from the road should look period. Storage trailers may be left at the back of your space, if there is enough room, but they must be hidden inside a structure, or completely covered.

- Allowable tent materials are canvas or other solid fabric covering.
- Commercial rental tents are allowed.
- Pop-ups are NOT allowed.
- Plastic tarps not covered by slip covers are forbidden.
- Parachutes are NOT tents. They are a FIRE HAZARD and are strictly forbidden!
- THE FINAL DECISION INVOLVING QUESTIONABLE TENTS OR IN REFERENCE TO ANY OF THE ABOVE WILL RESIDE WITH THE MERCHANT AUTOCRAT.

AMBIENCE

Any music inappropriate to SCA period is banned (e.g, modern music); all other music or offensive noise WILL be moderated at your neighbor's request. IF IT ANNOYS YOUR NEIGHBOR, IT WILL ANNOY THE MERCHANT AUTOCRAT.

ELECTRICITY AND LIGHTING

Electricity cannot be guaranteed. If you need electricity, make sure to include it in your application.

Generators are NOT allowed in the merchant area.

FIRES

Braziers, Ground fires, open flames, and tiki torches are forbidden in the marketplace due to fire hazard. If you use flame-producing appliances such as Coleman-type lanterns or stoves they must be the "on-off" type. You must have a fire extinguisher immediately available.

FOOD MERCHANTS

You must comply with the standards of the MS department of health. If you want to be a food merchant, please send menu and prices along with electrical amperage needed to: merchantcrat@gulfwars.org

SERVICE ANIMALS

Owners of service animals should contact animalliaison@gulfwars.org in advance of the event for important information.

ALCOHOL

No alcohol may be sold anywhere on the site; therefore no merchant may offer for sale or otherwise distribute alcoholic beverages, subject to immediate eviction from the site.

****TRASH****

There will no longer be trash pick up in the merchant area. You must take your trash to the dumpster or designated locations. Food merchants are responsible for the trash their sales produce.

SALE TAX

Mississippi state sales tax of 7% for your sales made at Gulf Wars. This is to be remitted at the merchant office the last Saturday of the war. The tax form and instructions will be available in the merchant office. You do not need to get a separate tax number.

MERCHANT CHECK-IN

The site will be available for merchant check-in on FRIDAY, March 8th, from 12 Noon until 6 P.M.

DO NOT arrive before noon. You will not be allowed on-site earlier.

If you arrive after 6 P.M., you will have to wait until the regular Troll opening time of 1 P.M. on Saturday

NOTE: Spaces not occupied by 5 PM on Sunday, March 10, 2023 without previous notification of the merchant autocrat will be assigned to merchants on the waiting list.

VEHICLES

Vehicles must be moved to the parking lot as soon as you are done unloading. If you arrive at night, you may wait until morning to move.

Your vehicle must be parked in the parking lot before you may begin selling.

Merchants who arrive on Friday must have their vehicles out of the merchant area by 11 A.M. on March 10th.

Vehicles are NOT permitted in the merchant area between 11AM to 6 PM (except during set up and pack out).

MERCHANTING DAYS

SATURDAY, March 9th – SATURDAY, March 16TH.

SELLING HOURS

You must be open from 11 A.M. until 6 P.M. daily starting Monday March 11th.

Selling hours are from 3 P.M. Saturday, March 11th through **** 3 P.M.****, Saturday, March 16th.

Quiet time is from 11 P.M. to 7 A.M.; you may sell during these hours, just keep your noise level down.

****If a merchant wishes to close (for non emergencies) during required selling times, they must prearrange it with the merchant office. Notice must be posted at least a day ahead of time on the merchant information boards and at the merchant's tent.****

MOONLIGHT MADNESS 7 P.M. to 10 P.M.

You must be open until ****10 P.M.**** on Wednesday March 13th for Moonlight Madness. You may close Wednesday for up to 2 hours during the day with a sign as to when you are returning. You should reopen by 7 P.M. You may stay open later if you wish.

LEGAL INFORMATION

IMPORTANT: King's Arrow Ranch is a private property with the right to limit the hours, location and operation of any and all businesses on its premises. Gulf Wars XXXII merchants sell by invitation and must conform to the policies established regardless of license. Merchants sell at their own risk.

Registration gives the merchant the privilege of selling as an independent operator, not as an employee or agent of King's Arrow Ranch, Gulf Wars XXXII, or the SCA. Registration as a merchant is a privilege granted by King's Arrow Ranch, not a right. The Merchant Coordinator, Autocrat, or Site owner may revoke said approval or refuse to accept any application without reason or cause of any kind. Infractions of the rules may result in withdrawal of merchant privileges, expulsion from Gulf Wars XXXII, and can affect registration for future Gulf Wars.

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