

My first Fantasia Fair experience.

I'd found out about Fantasia Fair like many of us do, searching the internet. It sounded like it was what I needed, I scoured for all the info I could find and read everything. I'm going to do this, will it be something right for me **COVID!** What do you mean Fan Fair 2020 is cancelled? Like most I hibernated and had to wait until Fantasia Fair 2021 **was it worth the wait?**

We arrived early Saturday morning, I didn't want to miss anything (two daughters joined me), I'd never been to Provincetown and didn't know what to expect. I'm a transwoman and was just starting on my journey, 3 months HRT at the time. As I drove down Commercial Street, I was in awe of the banners across the street welcoming guests to Fantasia Fair; more Pride flags than I'd ever seen in one place, we were welcome.

We unloaded with help from staff, laughing and them asking how many months I was staying. I brought more than enough; I had no idea what I needed (I brought way too many shoes). Checked in at reception, they called me Miss, Ma'am and Christen I was already enjoying myself. After Placing our bags in the room, I then had to go park my vehicle, I had to park a quarter mile away but it was fine, a nice walk back (Parking is the worst part of Provincetown).

On to the important stuff, we headed to Fantasia Fair reception to get checked in and get credentials and for Covid documentation review (safety first). Everyone was nice and helpful, everything was so organized and friendly **brake check**, my covid card hadn't been signed, **WHAT?** A meltdown ensued; I'd been waiting over 18 months to be here. A suggestion was made about a smart phone medical app, **YES**, I had one and yes, we found the information. After pulling myself together and a bunch of hugs, all was good.

The first event that evening was the gathering of new members and old friends. It was wonderful to see so many people similar to me, all ages, all genders and all on journeys. We mingled and talked and listened, invited others to our table, I was starting to feel a weight lifting. These wonderful people could relate to me, I was treated not as an outsider but as a new friend. Pinch me, shake me, this must be a dream.

Every morning there is a Newcomers meeting, I highly recommend it not just to newcomers but for all. It is a great chance to meet others, with good knowledge shared on the day's events. It also gave time to check on each other, to make sure everyone was doing OK, and get directions to other sites/stores/restaurants to visit in town.

I tried to fit in every workshop I could, a few overlapped, but there's always next time. I found the speakers at the workshops very knowledgeable and informative. Lunches were always a fun gathering, great food and great company. I didn't get much time for shopping or site seeing, but I have returned to P-town several times in 2022 to enjoy things I'd missed. There are plenty of new things to see and do every time you visit. There always seems to be an event happening in P-town.

Though it didn't apply to me, there was also a Significant Others morning meeting that I heard was wonderful for the many couples that attended the fair. Also, there are therapists and medical staff on hand.

We found vivid night life in P-town, wonderful restaurants, and friendly locals. Their Police Department was polite and friendly, and I had the privilege to talk to several officers. They even photo bombed one of my daughters' selfies on accident and came to see the picture, it was fun and we had a good laugh. They do have a job to do, are well trained and I found them to be very respectful and knowledgeable of our community.

The evening activities put on by Fantasia Fair were wonderful, I highly recommend getting on stage in one of the evening events. I did two out of three; very unsure of myself at first, yet so pleased I did. Common Thread Show, Open Mic Night, and the third being Fantasia Fair Follies. I enjoyed watching great performances and felt so proud knowing my daughters had volunteered to help backstage. Other evening events were Banquet & Dance party, and BINGO (my favorite time, we laughed until we had to leave.) This year's BINGO will be extended; the gift basket awards were amazing. Another event is the Transgender Pioneer Award. The learning experience of being able to listen to the journey, contributions and achievements of the recipient was amazing.

There is a term called "Pink Fog" - it's the realization that Fan Fair is concluding- I felt that Pink Fog start to set in on the final night at the Awards Banquet. Luckily, the wonderful meal and the beautiful connections I had made with new friends, kept the fog at bay for the remainder of the evening. We gathered the next and final morning for breakfast and said our farewells until next year.

Was it worth the wait, for me the answer is emphatically **YES**, I signed up for Fan Fair 2022 as soon as I returned home. I recommend it for all in our community. If you are new to the event please don't be nervous about asking anyone involved with Fan Fair anything, (flag me down if you need too, even to just introduce yourself and say Hi), their goal is for you to enjoy the event the best way possible for you, **THEY CARE.**

Christen