

A Brief and Incomplete History of Comic Cons (It's more than just San Diego and New York)

By Steve Sternberg



I just attended the New York Comic Con, along with roughly 200,000 other folks from all over the world (and had my picture taken with the Defenders), so I thought this a good time to write about how these types of gatherings have grown from their humble beginnings to the large-scale, multi-media, multi-genre, mega events they are today.

Comic Cons have come a long way since the first “official” comic book convention took place in New York City in 1964 with roughly 100 attendees in a hotel conference room sitting on folding chairs.

Today, there are more than 1,000 Comic Cons across the country throughout the year, ranging from giant national multi-day events attracting 100,000+ attendees, to smaller, regional and local conventions drawing a few thousand.

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Originally, these conventions focused primarily on comic books and the surrounding culture, where comic book fans could spend a few hours meeting creators, artists, experts, and one another to discuss story arcs, cover art, and buy and sell back issues. Today, they're comic conventions in name only. While you can still buy old comic books (many quite expensive), most Comic Cons have grown into multi-day events that include numerous pop-culture and entertainment elements, including collectibles of every stripe, comic books, sci-fi, fantasy, horror, anime, manga, toys, animation art, trading cards, video games, graphic novels, professional wrestling, and cosplay (costume

play, where fans dress up as fictional characters from movies, TV shows, comic books, or video games). Celebrity photo ops, autographs, and book signings are also generally available. The larger conventions typically also have movie and television series previews, screenings, and panel discussions.



It was during late 1990s and early-to-mid 2000s, that Comic Cons really started to grow and expand into broader pop-culture events, helped by the rise of blockbuster sci-fi and superhero movies. The first *X-Men* (2000) and *Spider-Man* (2002) films, and the rise of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, which began with the 2008 release of *Iron Man*, brought comic-book superheroes into the mainstream.



In addition to the superhero genre, the early-to-mid 2000s saw the *Star Wars* prequels, edgier original ad-supported scripted cable series (such as *Sons of Anarchy*, *Breaking Bad*, and *The Walking Dead*), and premium cable hits (such as *True Blood*, *Dexter*, and *Game of*

Thrones) – all of which contributed to igniting fan interest. The emergence of streaming platforms (with shows like *Stranger Things*, along with several new *Star Trek* and Marvel series, in the 2010s and 2020s, created even more anticipation and excitement.



Movie and TV studios, which had long ignored Comic Cons, started to take notice, and realized large fan gatherings could be used to promote (and get additional press) for upcoming projects. Major stars and casts started showing up in exclusive panel discussions designed to generate buzz and get fans talking. Studios started providing sneak peaks of highly anticipated upcoming projects. With the advent of social media platforms, the reach and influences of these events was amplified even further. Comic Cons experienced a period of explosive growth.

The most well-known and influential conventions in the U.S. are the San Diego Comic Con in July and the New York Comis Con in October, both four-day events. In addition to being a marketplace to buy and sell comic books and other pop-culture items, these have also become major multi-media marketing events – TV and movie stars join panels, pose for photo ops, sign autographs, and fans often see exclusive trailers of new movies and TV series.

Anything related to superheroes or sci-fi tend to have a significant presence at these events. On the TV front, anything sci-fi, fantasy, horror, or even peripherally pop-culture related, on broadcast, ad-supported and premium cable, or streaming platforms, have been represented at these conventions.

Here's a look at the San Diego and New York Comic Cons:



The San Diego Comic Con (SDCC), doing business as Comic-Con International, is a public-benefit non-profit organization. It was founded in 1970 as The Golden State Comic Book Convention, initially drawing around 300 people. By 1973, it was officially re-named the San Diego Comic Con. In 1979, it had reached 6,000 attendees, and few (if anyone) realized how big it would eventually become. In 1989, there were roughly 11,000 attendees. There were numerous other annual conventions that were contained in their own universes – *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Dr. Who*, etc. – which initially limited the growth of the San Diego show.

Originally a convention designed to showcase comic books and sci-fi/fantasy, studios did not see it as having any value for marketing their upcoming projects. But that began to change during the late 1990s/early 2000s. In 1992, attendance broke 20,000 for the first time, and by 1997, it reached 40,000. Thereafter, it started a real growth spurt, hitting 50,000 in 2001, 60,000 in 2002, 70,000 in 2003, 95,000 in 2004, 103,000 in 2005, 123,000 in 2006, and 130,000+ in 2010.



In 2015, the year the highly anticipated film, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, debuted, SDCC drew its highest attendance ever, at 170,000. Since then, most counts place its annual attendance at 135,000+, which is the maximum capacity of its current venue (the San Diego Convention Center). It remains the most publicized and influential event of its kind, although no longer the largest.

The 2020 and 2021 conventions were canceled due to the pandemic, and a digital streaming event was held in its place. A smaller in-person “San Diego Comic Con Special Edition” was held in

November 2021 (which was quite controversial). Proof of vaccination was required and masks were mandatory. The regular convention returned in July 2022.

The 2023 event took place in the midst of WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes, and was a more subdued affair with far fewer panels and less major studio participation and celebrity appearances than usual. SAG-AFTRA members were prohibited from participating in promoting their projects, so they couldn't be involved in most panels).

It was back to full force in 2024 – although notably, [Star Wars](#) and Netflix have mostly skipped recent Comic Cons (they have their own fan events – Lucasfilm's *Star Wars Celebration* and Netflix's *Tudum*). The SDDC's contract with the city runs through 2026, and there have been rumors that the organizers might consider moving it to other cities (and venues that can hold even larger crowds).

Here's a look at the major TV show-related panels and presentations at the past two years at the San Diego Comic Con. While the production studios typically host these events, I'm listing them based on the network or streaming service that airs them.

San Diego Comic Con 2024 TV Panels

ABC	Abbott Elementary, The Rookie
CBS	Ghosts, Tracker
CW	Superman & Lois
FOX	Krapopolis, Universal Basic Guys (new), The Great North, Bob's Burgers, The Simpsons
Adult Swim	Common Side Effects (new), Rick & Morty: The Anime (new), My Adventures With Superman
AMC/AMC+	Snowpiercer, The Walking Dead: Dead City, The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon – The Book of Carol, Interview With a Vampire, Mayfair Witches
FX	What We Do in the Shadows
Nickelodeon	SpongeBob SquarePants
TBS	American Dad
Syndication	WOW: Women of Wrestling
MGM+	From
HBO	The Penguin (new)
Showtime	Dexter: Original Sin (new)
Apple TV+	Silo
Disney+	Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Dr. Who
Hulu	Solar Opposites, Futurama
Max	Harley Quinn, Kite Man: Hell Yeah! (new)
Netflix	Star Trek: Prodigy
Paramount+	Tales of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (new), Star Trek: Strange New Worlds, Star Trek: Lower Decks, Starfleet Academy (new)
Peacock	Teacup (new), Those About to Die (new)
Prime Video	The Boys, Lord of the Rings: Rings of Power, Invincible, Hazbin Hotel, The Legend of Vox Machina, Sausage Party: Foodtopia, Batman: Caped Crusader

San Diego Comic Con 2025 TV Panels

ABC	Abbott Elementary, The Rookie
CBS	Ghosts
FOX	Bob's Burgers, The Simpsons, American Dad, Family Guy
Adult Swim	Rick and Morty
AMC/AMC+	The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon, Anne Rice's Interview With a Vampire
BET	Lil Kev (new)
Comedy Central	South Park, Beavis and Butt-Head, Digiman!
FX	Alien: Earth (new)
Nickelodeon	Avatar: The Last Airbender
SYFY	Resident Alien
HBO	The Penguin, IT: Welcome to Derry (new)
Showtime	Dexter: Resurrection (new)
Starz	Outlander, Outlander: Blood of My Blood (new), Spartacus: House of Asher (new)
Disney+	Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Phineas and Ferb, Agatha All Along, Daredevil: Born Again
HBO Max	Peacemaker
Hulu	Solar Opposites, King of the Hill, Futurama, Paradise
Paramount+	NCIS: Tony & Ziva (new), Star Trek: Strange New Worlds, Star Trek: Starfleet Academy (new)
Peacock	Twisted Metal
Prime Video	The Mighty Nein (new), The Legend of Vox Machina, Upload, Gen V, Butterfly (new), The Wheel of Time



The New York Comic Con (NYCC), produced and managed by ReedPop, started in 2006, and was initially much smaller than the San Diego convention (and took place in February). It was

located in the main exhibition hall of the Jacob Javits Center, with a capacity of 10,000. Many more attendees than anticipated showed up (roughly 33,000), and fire marshals had to lock down admissions until enough people left to make space for new folks. I was there, and it was a real mess. Over the next few years, the event took over more space in the Javits Center and attendance started to grow. But it would be several more years before it began to rival San Diego Comic Con levels.



In 2013, when single-day passes for Thursday (the first day of the four-day event) were available for the first time, attendance topped 130,000, putting it on par with the San Diego show (in attendance, but not yet in the number of all-star panels or influence). In 2014, attendance hit 151,000, making it the largest show in North America. In 2017, it grew to 180,000, and reached a high of more than 250,000 in 2018 and 2019. The 2020 show was canceled due to COVID. As was the case with the SDCC, a virtual event was held. It returned in a somewhat subdued in-person convention in 2021. All attendees over the age of 12 were required to show proof of vaccination. Attendance was estimated at 200,000 in 2022-24.

Since the SDCC takes place in California, it traditionally had a much larger presence of Hollywood studios and all-star panels. But that has been gradually changing. While the SDCC is in July, the NYCC is in October, just as the fall TV season is getting underway, and right before any holiday theatrical movies are released.

Unlike SDCC, which doesn't really focus on professional photo ops and autographs, both are large parts of NYCC (these require purchasing separate tickets).

Here's a list of the major TV show related panels at the New York Comic Con during the past two conventions.

New York Comic Con 2024 TV Panels

CBS	Ghosts, Elsbeth
Fox	The Simpsons, Grimsburg, Universal Basic Guys (new)
NBC	Saturday Night Live
Adult Swim	Rick & Morty, Women Wearing Shoulder Pads, Common Side Effects, YOLO: Rainbow Trinity (new), Lazarus (new)
AMC/AMC+	Mayfair Witches, Walking Dead: Dead City, Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon – The Book of Carol (new)
Cartoon Network	Teen Titans Go!
Disney Channel	Phineas and Ferb
FX	What We Do in the Shadows
Nickelodeon	SpongeBob SquarePants, Max and the Midnighters (new)
SYFY	Wynonna Earp
HBO	The Penguin (new), Dune: Prophecy (new), The Franchise (new), House of the Dragon
Starz	Outlander, Sweetpea (new)
Apple TV+	Shrinking,
BritBox	Passenger (new)
Disney+	Phineas and Ferb, Goosebumps: The Vanishing (new)
Hulu	Futurama, Goosebumps: The Vanishing (new)
Max	Creature Commandos (new)
Paramount+	School Spirits, Star Trek: Lower Decks, Star Trek: Picard, Star Trek: Section 31 (new)
Peacock	Hysteria! (new)
Prime Video	Cross (new), Secret Level (new)
Netflix	The Fall of the House of Usher
Crunchyroll	Various anime

New York Comic Con 2025 TV Panels

ABC	Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. reunion
Fox	Bob's Burgers
NBC	Saturday Night Live
Adult Swim	Primal
AMC/AMC+	Ann Rice's Immortal Universe, The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon
Disney Channel	Phineas and Ferb
FX	Alien: Earth (new), The Beauty (new)
Nickelodeon	Avatar: The Last Airbender (20 th anniversary)
USA	Mr. Robot 10 th Anniversary
HBO	IT: Welcome to Derry (new), A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms (new)
Apple TV+	Slow Horses
Disney+	Daredevil: Born Again season, VisionQuest (new), Wonder Man (new), Your Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man, X-Men '97
HBO Max	Adventure Time: Fionna and Cake
Hulu	One-Punch Man
Netflix	Jurassic World: Chaos Theory
Paramount+	NCIS: Tony & Ziva (new), Star Trek Universe
Prime Video	The Mighty Nein (new), The Legend of Vox Mqchina, Cross, Hazbin Hotel, Invincible, Bat-Fam (new)
Tubi	Braking Bear (new)
Crunchyroll	Various previews, My Hero Academia

Other Notable U.S. Comic Cons

There are many other annual Comic-Con-style events throughout the U.S. Most include comic books, graphic novels, manga, anime, tabletop and video games, sci-fi/fantasy, horror, professional wrestling, webcomics, movies, and television. There are also usually opportunities for photos and autographs with actors and artists. Here are some of the larger comic/pop culture conventions.



Fan Expo is a group of pop-culture conventions operated by Fan Expo HQ, a unit of Informa plc. Most of its events are run under the Fan Expo banner.

In 2021, Informa Acquired Wizard Entertainment's conventions, widely known as **Wizard World**, which produced between 15 and 20 smaller conventions across North America since 1996. The highly popular *Wizard* magazine was founded in 1991. Wizard purchased the Chicago Comic Con in 1997 and re-branded it *Wizard World Chicago*, as it expanded from its core publishing business into comic-book conventions. In 2002, Wizard World expanded to Philadelphia, and then rapidly added other cities to the mix. By 2011, the company discontinued its print division to focus exclusively on its convention business.

The Wizard World events were really a new type of convention, expanding the focus beyond just comic books, to other elements of pop culture and collectibles. While attendance figures are hard to come by, they generally drew anywhere from 10,000 to 80,000+ attendees – the largest one being the Chicago event in August (which attracted 70,000 fans in 2009 and 80,000 in 2013). All the Wizard World Comic Cons combined, generated between 200,000 and 750,000+ attendees annually, depending on how many conventions were held in a particular year – it had a high of 25 conventions in 2015, which dropped to 19 in 2016 (when they started losing money), 13 in 2018, and just 6 in 2021, before the business was sold. The six conventions, in Chicago, Cleveland, New Orleans, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Portland, were re-branded as Fan Expo.

In 2026, Fan Expo events in the North America will include, New Orleans (Jan.), Portland (Jan.), Vancouver (Feb.). Cleveland (Mar.), Denver (May), Philadelphia (May), Boston (Aug.), Chicago (Aug.), Canada (Aug.), Dallas (Sept.), Edmonton (Sept.), and San Francisco (Nov.), as well as

Megacon Orlando (Feb.), FanX Salt Lake City (Sept.), Toronto Comicon (Mar.), and the Calgary Expo (April).



Megacon Orlando the largest comic convention in the Southern U.S., was acquired by Informa/Fan Expo in 2015. With more than 160,000 attendees in 2025 (it boasted 190,000 in 2024), it is now the second largest comic convention in North America (behind only the New York Comic Con). The four-day event is usually held in February or March.



Fan Expo Denver (formerly **Denver Pop Culture Con**), was acquired by Informa/Fan Expo in 2021 and is the largest Fan Expo branded Comic Con, attracting more than 110,000 attendees over four days in May, June, or July.



FanX Salt Lake Comic Convention, inaugurated in 2013 as **Salt Lake Comic Con**, is Utah's most attended convention, and one of the biggest in the country. According to organizers, it typically draws more than 100,000 attendees during its three days in September each year.



Fan Expo Chicago (formerly **Wizard World Chicago**) is one of the larger comic cons in the U.S., with more than 75,000 attendees over three days in August.



Fan Expo Dallas (formerly **Dallas Comic Con**) is a three-day event that typically draws more than 50,000 fans, and takes place in May/June. It was acquired by Informa/Fan Expo in 2014.



Fan Expo Boston (formerly **Boston Comic Con**) was acquired by Informa/Fan Expo in 2016 and typically draws more than 55,000 attendees over three days in August.



Fan Expo Philadelphia (formerly **Wizard World Philadelphia**) is generally held for three days in May and attracts more than 50,000 fans annually.



Fan Expo San Francisco, New Orleans, Portland, and Cleveland each draw more than 30,000 per show (the latter three were formerly **Wizard World** events).



D23: The Ultimate Disney Fan Event (formerly the **D23 Expo**) is a three-day event that takes place in even-numbered years. Organized for members of *D23: The Official Disney Fan Club*, it is usually held in August or September. D23 was founded in 2009 (D stands for Disney, and 23 is for 1923, the year Walt Disney founded the company). It started out with a booth at the San Diego Comic Con in 2009, before the first official D23 Expo. It includes exclusive first looks at upcoming Disney projects (including anything [Star Wars](#), Pixar, and Marvel, and series premiering on Disney+), other special announcements, as well as celebrity appearances, memorabilia trading, exclusive merchandise, and various fan contests. Disney does not release attendance figures for this event, but it has been estimated at more than 100,000 per year. *The New York Times* estimated the 2022 expo drew 140,000 fans.



Phoenix Fan Fusion (formerly **Phoenix Comic Con**) is a three-day event held in downtown Phoenix in May or June (most often on Memorial Day weekend). It was founded in 2002 as the Phoenix Cactus Comicon, with only a few hundred fans in attendance. By 2016 it had more than 100,000. Attendance declined to 80,000 in 2017 and fell to 57,000 in 2018. But it has since rebounded, with a record-setting attendance of more than 130,000 in 2024 and 2025.



L.A. Comic Con is one of the largest independent comic cons in the U.S. Initially founded as **Comikaze Expo** in 2011 by Regina Carpinelli and her two younger brothers as an event to showcase local Los Angeles talent, the show has gone through several re-brandings – first to *Stan Lee's Comikaze Expo*, then *Stan Lee's L.A. Comic Con*, to just *L.A. Comic Con*. The three-day event (in September or October) has grown substantially, going from 35,000 attendees in 2011, to more than 100,000 in 2025.



Emerald City ComicCon, in Seattle, Washington, began in 2003, as a one-day event with about 3,000 people in attendance. ReedPop, the same folks who organize the New York Comic Con, acquired the event in 2015. The now four-day convention, usually taking place in March or April, has grown to be the largest Comic Con in the Pacific Northwest, drawing 90,000+ attendees.



Chicago Comic & Entertainment Expo (C2E2), also run by ReedPop, takes place in March or April, and is the largest pop-culture convention in the Midwest. It has been known for some unique big events, such as when they auctioned off items from the Captain America, Iron Man, and Thor movies. The three-day convention drew 27,500 people to its first show in 2010, but has since grown significantly – estimates place attendance at 75,000 in 2023, 85,000 in 2024, and a record 100,000 in 2025 (which might have been fueled by its *Lord of the Rings* reunion).



Rhode Island Comic Con was founded in 2012 and is New England's largest pop-culture convention. The three-day November event has grown substantially over the years, and has changed venues a few times to accommodate the larger crowds. It drew about 15,000 attendees in its first year, but grew to an estimated 100,000 in 2024.



ATL Comic Convention (formerly **Atlanta Comic Con**) is one of the largest comic conventions in the Southeast. The three-day convention typically draws more than 90,000 attendees. It was held in the summer prior to 2023, moved to February for 2023 and 2024, and back to July in 2025.



Dragon Con was founded in 1987 with 1,400 fans in attendance. It takes place every year over Labor Day weekend, encompassing five hotels in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Originally a sci-fi and gaming convention, it added a Comics Expo in 1990 and robotic competition ("Robot Battles") in 1991. Dragon Con also hosted the *International Starfleet Conference*, and in 1999 introduced the first *Miss Klingon Empire Beauty Pageant*. Since

2002, it also hosted Atlanta's largest annual parade. As of 2017, it became a five-day event, starting the Thursday before Labor Day. Attendance peaked in 2019, when it drew more than 85,000 fans. Attendance declined sharply post-pandemic to just 42,000 in 2021, but rose back up to 72,000 in 2024 and 75,000 in 2025.



Planet Comicon, in Kansas City, Missouri, is the region's largest pop-culture and comic book event, held over three days in March. The locally-owned and independently operated event started in 1999 with 1,200 attendees and just one celebrity guest (the original R2D2). It drew an estimated 70,000 people in 2025.



WonderCon is a three-day comic book, sci-fi, and film convention held in Anaheim in March or April. It started in 1987, and in 2001 was taken over by Comic-Con International, the company that runs the San Diego Comic Con. It reportedly drew 65,000 attendees in 2025.



Rose City Comic Con was founded by Ron and Paula Brister, who got the idea while on a road trip to the San Diego Comic Con in 2011. The first Portland, Oregon convention was held in September 2012 with about 4,000 attendees. The following year, it was co-funded and co-organized by Emerald City Comic Con and attracted 18,000 people. The three-day event steadily grew and now attracts upward of 50,000 fans each year.



Awesome Con debuted in 2013 with just 7,000 attendees. The three-day con has grown to be one of the larger conventions on the East Coast (Washington, D.C.), although attendance can fluctuate dramatically year-to-year – it attracted about 60,000 people in 2024, but only an estimated 25,500 in 2025. It typically takes place in March or April.



Motor City Comic Con is held in Novi, Michigan. The three-day event, usually taking place in May, was founded in 1989 by comics retailer, Michael Goldman. Attendance has steadily grown through the years – there were 18,000 attendees in 2012, 30,000 in 2013, 40,000 in 2014, 50,000 in 2015, 60,000 in 2018, and topped out at 70,000 for the 30th anniversary event in 2019. In 2021, they added an October/November edition. They reportedly now draw around 50,000 people.



Comicpalooza debuted in July 2008 in Houston, Texas, to coincide with the release of *The Dark Knight*. The inaugural event had just 500 attendees. It has since been re-invented a number of times and grown tremendously, into a multi-genre event and one of Houston's largest conventions. It takes place over three days in May, June, or July, and attracts upward of 50,000 fans.



Big Texas Comic Con was first held in San Antonio, Texas in 2019, when several staff members of the **Alamo City Comic Con** (which had been around since 2013) decided to break away and form their own event. In its heyday (2014-15), the Alamo City Comic Con reportedly drew more than 70,000 attendees. The Big Texas Comic Con, which takes place over three days in October, is estimated to draw around 40,000-50,000 attendees.



HeroesCon was established in 1982 and takes place in June in Charlotte, North Carolina. It's organized by the *Heroes Aren't Hard to Find* comic book store, and continues to maintain a primary focus on comic books, with an emphasis on artists, writers, and the creative process. It attracts about 40,000-50,000 attendees annually.



GalaxyCon (formerly known as **Super Conventions** or **Supercon**) is run by GalaxyCon, LLC, a privately owned company based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It organizes comic book and anime conventions throughout the country, which it refers to as "3-day Festivals of Fandom." GalaxyCon events typically draw between 30,000 and 50,000 fans. In 2024, markets included, Raleigh, North Carolina (July), the largest GalaxyCon event, Richmond, Virginia (Mar.), Columbus, Ohio (Dec.), San Jose, California (Aug.), Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (May), and Des Moines, Iowa (Sept.). In 2025, GalaxyCon expanded to New Orleans (July), St. Louis (Oct.), and Milwaukee (Nov.).

GalaxyCon also has several smaller themed events, such as Animate! Raleigh (Jan.), Animate! Columbus (June), Nightmare Weekend Chicago (May), Nightmare Weekend Des Moines (Sept.), and Nightmare Weekend Richmond (Oct.).

GalaxyCon is big on marketing autographed celebrity photos and merchandise online, and during the pandemic expanded to include virtual events so fans could meet and chat with celebrities, and get personalized autographs without needing to travel. They continue to provide virtual events throughout the year.



Albuquerque Comic Con is “the largest and longest running convention in New Mexico (16 consecutive years).” The three-day event takes place in January, and has consistently attracted 50,000 or so visitors each year.



The *Supercon* trademark now only applies to **Florida Supercon**, which occurs in July in Miami, and draws an estimated 40,000 fans. It was sold to ReedPop in 2019.



Indiana Comic Convention takes place over three days in March. It started in 2014 with about 20,000 attendees, which grew to roughly 45,000 in 2024.



Puerto Rico Comic Con is a three-day event, which It has been held in San Juan, Puerto Rico since 2002 – it was initially called the **Caribbean Sci-Fi Expo**, and took place at a local YMCA. The first convention drew just 1,000 attendees. It was re-branded and moved to a larger location in 2007. Today it draws roughly 40,000 visitors each year.



Colorado Springs Comic Con is a three-day event from Altered Reality Entertainment, the East Coast convention operator behind the Rhode Island Comic Con. The inaugural event was in 2016, and drew more than 10,000 fans. It reportedly now draws about 30,000 attendees each year.



Twin Cities Con was created by Ben Penrod in 2021. He founded Comic Cons in several other cities, including Awesome Con in Washington, DC. It takes place in Minneapolis over three days in November, and draws roughly 25,000 fans.

There are also numerous medium and smaller sized local conventions across the country every year that draw anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000+ fans. These smaller shows don't get the same media attention as SDCC or NYCC, but they do have loyal followings. They tend to focus more heavily on comic books, with an emphasis on creators (artists and writers). They have a more intimate feel and are often significantly less expensive to attend than some of the larger comic cons.

Here's just a few of them:



South Texas Comic Con was founded in 2014 by Ramsey Ramirez, owner of Kaboom Comics and Kaboom Games. The three-day event takes place in McAllen, Texas and typically draws about 20,000 people.



Milwaukee Comic Con is Milwaukee's longest running comic book and pop culture convention (since 2016), taking place twice a year (February and September) at the Wisconsin State Fairgrounds. It reportedly drew 18,000 attendees in 2025. It is produced by M.C. Conventions, which also has Comic Cons in Dupage, Illinois, St. Louis, Lafayette, IN, Madison, WI, and New Orleans.



Baltimore Comic Con started out as a one-day show in 2000, focusing primarily on comic books, extended to two days in 2002, and due to demand from attendees and exhibitors, went to three days in 2014, as it continued to grow in size and popularity. Traditionally takes place in September or October, and typically draws 15,000+ fans.



Big Lick Comic Con was created in 2017 by JD Sutphin, owner of Big Lick Comics in Roanoke, Virginia. The initial two-day event drew 2,000 people. Since then, it has become a biannual event, held in February and August. The August 2024 event reportedly drew 12,000 people. In addition to the Roanoke conventions, it has held events in other Virginia locations and Greensboro, North Carolina.



Big Apple Comic Con is the longest-running comic-book/pop-culture convention in New York City, having started by retailer Michael Carbonaro in March 1996 in the basement of a church, with 4,000 attendees. During its heyday (2001-2008) it featured multiple shows a year, with its big one in November. The show was acquired by Wizard Entertainment from 2009-13, but re-acquired by Carbonaro/Big Apple CC Corp (BACC) in 2014. It's generally held in the fall and draws roughly 10,000 fans.



Nickel City Comic Con is Western New York's largest pop-culture and comic book convention. It began in 2016 and attracts more than 10,000 fans to Buffalo for its summer and fall editions.



Steel City Con, in Monroeville, Pennsylvania, was founded in 1994 as the Pittsburgh Comicon, and was acquired by Wizard World in 2015, before being succeeded by Steel City Con in 2020. It's a three-day event, and while attendance figures are not readily available, estimates peg it at more than 10,000.



Hall of Heroes Comic Con in Elkhart Indiana attracted 6,400 attendees to its inaugural event in 2017. The annual two-day convention is a fundraiser for the Hall of Heroes Museum, which is the only museum dedicated to the 80-plus year history of superheroes. More recent attendance figures are not publicly available, but some estimates place it between 5,000 and 10,000.



Central Florida Comic Con is smaller than other cons in the region, and has been around since 2018. The two-day event reportedly draws more than 7,000 attendees, and is primarily focused on comic books and related merchandise.



Great Lakes Comic Con started in 2010 in Southeastern Michigan, with fewer than 100 attendees. It has since gradually grown, drawing about 3,000 people in 2015, and 7,000 in 2024.



Garden State Comic Fest celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2024. There's a summer version in Morristown, New Jersey in June and a "Winter Fest" takes place in Sussex County in January. It reportedly draws 5,000+ fans.



Central Carolina Comic Con had its inaugural two-day event in South Carolina in January 2025, with a reported 5,000+ attendees.



Arctic Comic Con is a two-day April event in Anchorage, Alaska, which began in 2018. There is no publicly available attendance data, but it probably draws 5,000+ people each year.

Comic Cons are not confined to the U.S., as numerous events, large and small, take place throughout the world.



Japan's **Comiket**, is generally considered the largest fan convention in the world, having grown from fewer than 10,000 in 1982 to over half a million in the mid-2000s (with a reported record 750,000 in 2019). The twice a year Tokyo convention (Winter and Summer) ran for four days pre-pandemic and switched to two days post-pandemic. The summer 2025 event reportedly had more than 250,000 attendees.



Lucca Comics and Games Festival is considered Europe's largest comics and gaming event, second globally to Comiket. The five-day event in Lucca, Italy, traditionally takes place at the end of October, in conjunction with All Saints Day. The event has recently gotten more than 300,000 attendees.



CCXP (Comic Con Experience) is a four-day event in São Paulo, Brazil, that reportedly draws more than 250,000 attendees.



Angoulême International Comics Festival in France takes place over four days on the last weekend of January and attracts roughly 200,000 attendees. The festival also awards several prestigious prizes for cartooning.



MCM London Comic Con draws more than 100,000 fans to its twice-a-year event (which takes place over three days on the last weekend in May and October).



BilibiliWorld (BW Comic Con) in Shanghai is one of China's largest ACG (anime, comics, gaming) expos, drawing around 250,000 visitors (the July 2025 three-day event reportedly attracted a record 400,000 attendees).