

# The International Convention of AA



***By Joe C.***

“The Language of the Heart.” This is our theme in Vancouver for this iteration of the International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous, July 3rd to 6th, 2025. As this article is posted, it’s not too late to attend. So far, 40,000 have registered for the quinquennial International Convention. Guestimates climb to 50,000 AAs, Al-Anons and friends of AA in attendance. The 2025 convention includes an unprecedented contribution from the secular AA community within our larger fellowship. For the last 35 years, the three-day event has included a “We Agnostics” panel of freethinkers: Seattle 1990, San Diego 1995, Minneapolis 2000, Toronto 2005, San Antonio 2010, Atlanta 2015, Detroit 2020—cancelled due to COVID. This year, in addition to “We Agnostics”, there will be two new secular panels: “One Big Tent” and “What is a ‘secular’ AA meeting format?” A careful look at the Vancouver program, designed by the New York IC2025 committee, reveals a broad and deliberate effort to showcase underrepresented AA populations, of all kinds.

My first AA convention was Montreal in 1985 – 40 years ago!!! It is meaningful to experience a stadium full of manic people with something in common, outside of their usual meeting environment. If we do the math, most AAs do not or cannot go. I think everyone who can, would enjoy coming once, and I know some who make it a must-go event every five years. I always wish I could take in more of the meetings and events at every conference or convention. No one can do it all. We all test our “emotional sobriety” at these events.

If you are going to be in Vancouver be sure to attend, and participate in sharing or Q&A after the panelists in many of the meetings. Here are some places to meet friends and have your say, if you wish:

- Friday at 8:15 AM, Nosotros los Agnosticos In the Spanish Marathon Meeting, (Fairmount Hotel Vancouver).
- Friday @ 11:00 AM, “What is a ‘secular’ format in AA?” (Convention Centre East MR 10- 12) with Ralph B, Sue J and Rick F, BC and Mary C, GA
- Saturday @ 9:30 AM, “We Agnostics,” (Convention Centre West, Ballroom B) with Jeff S, OK, Keira H, NJ, Amy H, BC, Sam E, NV.
- Saturday @ 3:00 PM, “One Big Tent” (Convention Centre West, Rooms 109-110) with Joe C, ON, Stephanie F., NZ, Michel D, ON, Rady A, OH. Also on at the same time: LGBTQ+, Emotional Sobriety, Young People

Other special purposes meetings are included – some in the same time slot: BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Women in AA, young people - there are many tough choices. Many meetings are recorded.

The block party will begin on Thursday at around 7:30pm. The daytime A.A. meetings will be held on Friday and Saturday throughout the Convention Campus. Marathon (around the clock) meetings also include some of the main convention hotels.

The three big meetings will be held at BC Place Stadium, the biggest sporting and event arena in British Columbia. These “big events” (meetings and ceremonies) include the flag ceremony Friday night, 50+ sober old-timers Saturday and closing ceremonies Sunday.

If you’re still thinking of going and you’re flying, there are airline discounts: Air Canada is providing our group with discounted travel. Promotion Code RF4VA681. Other airline discounts can be found from the SkyTeam partners, including Aerolíneas Argentinas, Aeroméxico, Air Europa, Air France, China Airlines, Czech Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Garuda Indonesia, ITA Airways, Kenya Airways, KLM, Korean Air, Middle East Airlines, Saudia, TAROM, Vietnam Airlines, Virgin Atlantic, and Xiamen Air. To book, visit [skyteam.com/en/business-solutions/global-meetings](https://skyteam.com/en/business-solutions/global-meetings) and enter our Event ID: 4860S.

In-person registration is \$USD 185; the Vancouver convention centre will be open on Wednesday for on site registration July 2, 2025.

## **Hospitality Suites**

Many hospitality suites are open Wednesday through Saturday night. You can find International Conference of Secular AA, in the Tweedsmuir Room of The Fairmount Hotel Vancouver. Hours: Wednesday/Thursday 8 AM-8 PM, Friday & Saturday 8 AM to 6 PM. Secular AA volunteer opportunities still exist in our hospitality suite or for the host-committee at the convention venue.

Other hospitality suites can be found at Fairmount Waterfront, Hyatt, Pan Pacific, and Convention Centre East. Other hospitality suites to visit include ICYPAA (young people), AA Archives, GAL-AA (LGBTQIA+), IDAA (Doctors), ILAA (Lawyers), OIAA (Online AA Intergroup), Accessibility, Public Information, First Responders, Indigenous members, International Women’s Online Intergroup, Technology in AA, Deaf AA and Friends, AA regions and other countries around the world will have suites to visit, too.

If you have The Meeting App, check “news” for an advance program which includes all Hospitality Suite locations, FAQ and more. I just downloaded the A.A.W.S. Events App to my phone, which already has a wealth of Vancouver information including public transit, accessibility, maps to BC Place and the Convention Centre, plus the program.

### **Watch Party Viewings Registration**

If you’re staying home, AA offers several online registration and stream for a fee options available for individuals or viewing as a group. For 6-20 attendees, the virtual registration is \$200.00, for over 40 attendees, \$500.00.

The International World Convention of AA is normalizing unity over uniformity, and inclusion over exclusion for nonbelievers and other underrepresented populations. As I pack and look ahead, I think it’s a positive step that Vancouver 2025 is the first to include the International Conference of Secular AA as one of the many complementary hospitality suites. Detroit would have been the first, in 2020, except for the pandemic shutting everything down. Poor Detroit: they could have used the financial shot in the arm that AA brings in recovery love-in tourism. And Detroit was driving distance, for me from Toronto and I was registered and had a room booked. I look forward to Vancouver and hope to see some of you there.

### **Have your say.**

Are you going to Vancouver? What do you think of the state of AA as a whole? Are you pleased with the progress of inclusion and normalization of secular AA in events like this? Are you disappointed that your priorities and hopes aren’t being realized? Please, share your experiences.

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*For more information, click here:*

*[aa.org/international-convention](https://aa.org/international-convention)*

*<https://www.aasecular.org/vancouver-2025>*

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*Sober since disco, Joe C is a journalist/broadcaster who has covered music & entertainment, finance, culture, history, demographics, billiards, addiction and mental health. He has presented research and experience to treatment professionals and peers in the larger recovery community. His daily reflection book, [Beyond Belief: Agnostic Musings for 12 Step Life](#) is now in it’s third printing with over 35,000 copies in circulation. Joe C has been a regular AA Agnostica contributor through the years.*

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