

Sundance Film Festival 2023

Advice from Alumni

The biggest piece of advice I could give is probably the same every Sundance veteran would give to every Sundance virgin: relax, enjoy, it may be your first time, but hopefully, it won't be the last!

Preparation

- *Book your lodging EARLY! Get on it as soon as you are accepted. Get a place near a bus stop and enjoy the festival as much as you can. We stayed longer to enjoy the calm before & after the storm of our premiere.*
- *Stay on top of your deadlines, and there are a LOT of them. There is a lot of prep work, between finishing your film and getting all the materials in for the Festival, so stay organized and on it! Make sure your team's main contact is someone that you trust and is really capable, it will save you so much stress.*
- *Bring lots of warm clothes and be ready to meet people and make conversations about films and festival experiences! Oh, and bring business cards – and prepare to hand them out like candy.*
- *I would definitely plan on bringing a friend/significant other along to help with managing time at the festival. Someone who is not there so much for the "scene," their own career, or even the movies--someone who mainly comes to be of 100% support for you. Someone to remember the little things: what tickets you need to have with you; who to call back; and even when to eat. Juggling all those things over the entire festival stay is nearly impossible. The stimulus, cold weather, sleep deprivation can really get to you. A partner in crime can also be a witness to you on how great of a job you are doing, at times when you may not realize it and need to be told!*

At Fest (In-person and Online)

- *The Director's Brunch was by far the highlight of the week. There's nothing more motivating than hearing directors talk about the path they took to where they are. People making great features for only hundreds of dollars and putting their all into what they do is an inspiration.*
- *The best advice I ever got at Sundance: Try to have at least one meal a day with someone you like (regardless of what they can do for you and your movie)!*
- *See other films, especially docs. There's nothing that can put it all in perspective more than watching a heartfelt documentary, made on a small budget to remind you about why you became a filmmaker.*
- *Be present on social media – whether through Twitter or Instagram, that is where a lot of conversation directly with your audiences can take place there (Industry too). Make*

yourself available and engaged, especially if you aren't there in person – create your own buzz for your film.

- *Definitely schedule some time to do something non-festival related – ski, massage, hike – that kind of thing. Also check out films at random – can be very rewarding. Early morning screenings can be weirdly fun too! Drink lots of water, it's so damn dry. Moisturize! Remember to have fun, even if you're working. Say hi to everyone! Go for it.*

Connect

- *Get to know your fellow filmmakers. They're every bit as nervous and excited as you are. Chances are you will meet people you'll know the rest of your life. Don't be a jerk. Nobody likes that. And thank, thank, thank the volunteers and the staffers. It's really their festival — you're just lucky to be a guest there! Have fun.*
- *Sundance is an amazing place to meet incredibly talented and connected people from all facets of the industry. In fact, you will not find another festival more geared towards getting you to meet other filmmakers, press, producers, actors, etc. Avail yourself to all that the organizers offer and you will be hard pressed to ever find an event that will make you feel better about yourself and your chosen field.*
- *Sundance is about making the most of this unheralded opportunity to advance your career. Whether that means selling your film or getting your work noticed or film publicized or meeting and schmoozing everyone from big-time heavyweights to up-and-coming future filmmakers, I feel you absolutely MUST take advantage of everything the festival has to offer.*
- *Be nice to everyone. Staff, other filmmakers, volunteers, people on the bus, people in line, people sitting next to you at screenings, etc. If you're a dick, no one will want to help you, and you won't know who the cool people are; everyone looks like a schlump at the festival. Believe it or not, the best contacts you make will probably be random people you meet on the street, so don't put people off with your ego.*
- *Remember that the people who work for the festival do it out of love. They don't do it for the money. Most are volunteers. They love films, they love the festival and they are true pros. Let them know how you feel. It lifts the whole experience.*
- *A big tip for fist-time producers/ directors at Sundance is to get to know the Sundance staff members well and keep close in contact with them throughout the festival. They are exceptionally kind and dedicated people. They normally have solutions for all your problems and concerns!!*
- *Be yourself, be confident but not smug or conceited, relax, project, add humor and if there's a great pertinent story that's short, tell it. Make your intro short, to the point and thank the people at Sundance that bust their asses for you. Not just the programmers, but also your liaisons that never get the recognition they deserve.*