

SCA on a Shoestring

How to survive in the SCA with little time or money

by Alyssa Oaktree

Garb (costumes)

Gold Key - garb which is maintained specifically to loan to new members. If you call ahead with your size and gender, it is possible to have it brought to the event for you. Call your local chatelaine (new member contact).

check your closet - The second best is to check what you already own for what might work as garb. Remember what you got at that Renaissance Fair or street fair, or that shirt that you haven't worn in 10 years, etc. You may be willing to alter something to work, or you may have something already.

thriftshops/yard sales/second-hand stores - for \$10-12 you can get a shirt and pants that, with a little alteration, will work as garb. Add in \$5 worth of trim, \$2 of buttons, and you will look smashing! The only trick is finding out what will work and what won't. Take a look through the wardrobes of members, ask around, get help for your shopping trip, etc. This method involves some resourcefulness, and a little bit of skill with needle and thread, but does NOT require a sewing machine or a lot of time. You can sew on the subways, at the commons meeting, while watching TV, waiting for the microwave, or waiting between classes. This method works best for people who are somewhat small, since more items will fit or can be made smaller than can be made larger.

\$1/yd fabrics - fabrics don't have to be expensive. Check remnant bins, sale fabrics, etc. For as little as \$4-6 you can have enough fabric for a 2 piece outfit! Check fabric stores in ethnic neighborhood, not only do they have lower overheads, but indian and african prints can be both inexpensive and very period-looking. If there are many stores in one area, there is more competition, so look for fabric districts. Check out the prices at large craft store chains, but I have found that even their remnants are not discounted and I've never seen a price better than \$4/yd. Of course, once you have the fabrics, you'll need help sewing an outfit. Contact your Chatelaine, who probably knows who the local costumers are.

Feast Gear

Look for silver platters, ceramic or wooden bowls and plates, silverware, two or three tined forks, mugs and steins, silver wedding goblets, ceramic or crystal stemware, etc. Try thrift stores, yard sales, 99¢/Dollar stores. You might be surprised at what you can find!

Feast Fees

Ask after the menu or the theme of a feast, and if you won't be happy with it DON'T BUY IT! You are trying to save money, so don't buy food you aren't going to eat. You can find out weeks in advance what is planned for the feast. If it is a vegetarian middle eastern feast and you only like meat or hate middle eastern food, go offboard and bring food you'll like, and you'll be happy! Look at all the money you saved! Same goes the other way around: If you are vegetarian, and the feast is geared towards the meat-n-potato types, save your money and go off-board. As wonderful as all the vegetarian side dishes might be, you are paying cash for all that meat and you may come away from the table disappointed. If you have a huge appetite that is non-discerning, by all means get the feast and scrape the bowls clean (when everyone else has taken their servings of course!) and ask after leftovers at the kitchen, and you will have saved yourself the trouble of lugging a crate of apples and side of beef to the feasthall.

Armor

Fighting can be an expensive proposition. Inquire with the local Knight Marshal about Iron Key items (loaner fighting gear), used equipment, armoring workshops, etc. People have made armor from very hard plastic and from carpet remnants. Ask around. If you can't find it, ask me, I'll point you in the right direction. Helms are expensive, but they are the one place you won't want to skimp! You can get them from as cheap as \$50-75, but they usually run about \$100. Plastic armor is currently running about \$150 for a full suit, helm not included. Thus about \$200+ gets you fully suited and ready to go (not including shields and swords, which you can usually borrow).

Transportation to events

Carpooling is probably your best option for getting to events cheaply. If you own the car, ask others for money for gas and tolls. Second would be public transportation, if available. Select routes which have the lowest tolls (i.e. take the ferry back from Manhattan to Staten Island to save \$4-5), unless saving time is your priority.

Other Ideas

Try finding a sponsoring member for 1-2 events. When you're doing better, sponsor someone else. Pay half their entrance fees for a couple of events. Areas may want to come up with a donation to a membership scholarship fund, where members-in-need can dip to help pay membership fees or site fees. Bring it up at a local meeting and see how the idea is received. Events can also have scholarship applications for reduced site fees for people in need. Say, 10 reduced fee slots that people can apply for, or a reduced fee for people with large families.

Attend free workshops and classes, and take advantage of Universities. They are time-saving (ie: in transportation time), and generally low-fee (compared to tolls, gas and transit costs of attending multiple workshops or classes at other people's homes). Other people may be able to save you a tremendous amount of time in dead-end research, point out the most helpful research materials, loan out books, and save you lots of money in wasted materials by steering you clear of common errors. One of the workshops that everyone can make use of is garb-making workshops, just grab an old bedsheet and go! Call and find out if there's anything else you might need, and let them know you're coming. It's good practice, and you won't regret that extra underpiece or lightweight summer garb!

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