

Amateur Radio Fun At Quartzfest

You roll out of Vegas, drive south-southeast for 200 miles, make a few turns and suddenly, out on what's usually an empty stretch of desert, you find yourself surrounded by 400 amateur radio operators.

You're part of Quartzfest, where amateur operators with a fondness for getting out of the shack get together on the open desert every January.

What's the appeal?

"If you like amateur radio, if you like learning new things about amateur radio, if you like socializing with other amateur radio operators and if you like camping, it's a no-brainer to try to attend it at least once," says LVRAC member Tom, KG7HUP.

"You may even start making plans to attend it every year like I have for 4 years in a row now."

Quartzfest takes place every January outside of Quartzsite, Arizona. Organizers describe the event as "a week-long ham radio, camping, learning and living event."

It's an ARRL specialty convention where amateur operators share information on mobile antenna systems and shacks, RVs, portable and mobile EMCOMM operating and more.

There are lots of old friends to visit with and new friends to make. There's also lots to learn. LVRAC member Matt, K7XMD says the presentations he's been to "...have been good. The person doing the presentation is usually an average Joe that's done what they're talking about."

"I have been to quite a few presentations, " says Tom, KG7HUP. "One in fact, the scheduled presenter was a no-show and 2 other hams and myself got drafted to fill in as it was about activating POTA parks in 47 states in 3 months. Since all three of us had experience traveling and activating parks across the country, it was a natural fit. One was Mike, KE0VIM, 'The Travelin' Ham' on YouTube, Dirk, K5DGR, and myself."

LVRAC member David, K7FAN says, "The seminar on Onan generators and solar power systems was fantastic, but the musical hootenanny and happy hour by the campfire was pretty darned exceptional too."

[Enjoy some of the music by the campfire.](#)

Days spent at Quartzfest pass by with a pleasant blend of socializing, learning and enjoying the outdoors... the sparkling Sonoran Desert by day, the breathtaking southwestern sky at night.

When campfires and bonfires crackle, Quartzfest hams gather round to share stories, perhaps enjoy some live music and take in an experience unlike any other in amateur radio.

“I've run into many interesting folks,” says Tom, KG7HUP. “Gordon West, WB6NOA, Randy Hall, K7AGE and Dave Casler, KE0OG. Also Craig McVeay, N0CSM Nevada 's section manager for the ARRL. From Vegas... John, WO7K, Matt, K7XMD, David, K7FAN and Alex, KM7CYN.”

Close at hand to the Quartzfest site are great opportunities for exploring. David, K7FAN decided to check out the nearby Gold Eye Mine.

“I found it last year from browsing offroad places on Google Maps that I could get to on my adventure/dirt motorcycle. I failed to reach the mine last year. One of the roads was in a no trespass area. Turns out it's a well-traveled path, west of the Quartzsite location and easily accessible by walking, beach cruiser style e-Bike, Side by Side, or any 4WD vehicle with little to no trouble. It is about 5.8 miles away.”

[Explore the Gold Eye Mine in this video by Ramblin Pam.](#)

This year's Quartzfest took place January 18 to 24. The first Quartzfest took place in 1995. Over the years, attendance has edged up and down but it's never been about chasing big numbers. It's about the camaraderie, comfortable days and cool nights on the desert and the opportunity to be part of a community where amateur radio serves as a common bond.

“Go check it out,” says Matt, K7XMD.

[And don't forget to watch the LVRAC Quartzfest video.](#)