Afterburner Reports

Annual reports on how things went for the Future Turtles at Burning Man.

The canonical location of these is now on the public site.

- 2025 Afterburner Report
- 2024 Afterburner Report
- 2023 Afterburner Report
- 2022 Afterburner Report
- 2026 Afterburner Report

2025 Afterburner Report

I know, you want to see the pictures!

Whoop! And with Black Rock City in the rear view mirror, the sixth journey of the Turtle tribe into the temporary alternative zone of Burning Man is in the books. Scholars will debate whether this was the Best Burn Ever, or maybe the weather made this a Problematic Burn, or perhaps Best and Problematic are just different axes. I am a mere chronicler. Maybe we learned something.

It's kind of a cliché, but it's true: “you get the burn you need, not the burn you want.” The most consistent thing about going to Burning Man is that no matter what you expect and what you plan, what you actually get is really very very different, usually in a way that appears to suck and be very painful, but you learn, lick your wounds, and emerge better from it. This year I worked pretty hard on building new things for the camp: a cool kink fort which was destroyed by wind on the very first night, a cool Turtle sign which would not light up after the rain on the very first night, and our cool new conical Turtle Pavilion which immediately blew down in the wind on the very first night. None of them were really capable of dealing with 50mph sustained winds or intense rain. All of this was interesting, I think, because I'm taking it as an OMEN and CHANGES WILL BE MADE. More on that in a minute. Hang on. Let's do a recap first.

Build team: best year ever, by far. We had a big build team and easily got everything built on time. Weather during Build Week was not perfect, but also not really problematic. When the turtle bus arrived and everybody got off, they saw, for about five minutes, a fully complete camp ready for what promised to be a great week.

Hey, most things worked amazingly well this year! Our interactive program was friggin' amazing and as usual we blew away our neighbors. We had all our parties on time despite the awful weather. In chronological order: The opening night party was gorgeous and well-attended, the first event on playa and in the neighborhood and a bit of a flex that we have our shit together as a camp even while the gates have just opened. The kink party on Tuesday night almost looked like it wouldn't happen due to the shitty weather, but, come on, you know better than that--of course it happened and of course it was just a repeat of the mud party and of course it was the talk of the town. Then on Wednesday afternoon we hosted a million nekkid bike riders and if I remember correctly the rain coincided perfectly with our turn on the pub crawl, but that didn't stop us and we had great music and drinks and spirits. All of this stuff was so successful (in a year when many neighbors were cancelling or delaying their events) that you may wonder why I am thinking about CHANGES that might be MADE, but, all in good time, I'll come to that. Keep reading. It's only another 200 pages or so.

More interactivity! Basil had this really cute idea for Gaywatch, a sunscreen station. This smallish idea by just one turtle became so famous so quickly that I met somebody camping way over in the 3:00 zone who literally knew our camp as the Gaywatch camp. We continued to have Shuai's Tarot Readings which drew a big crowd. Tristan ran a lovely and well-attended yoga. At least twice, we

made quesadillas on the griddle for passers-by.

Let's talk about infrastructure. It went great this year! We did not have any significant problems with water, grey water, or electricity. The improvements we made to the Gayflower in Empire worked well and we had plenty of fresh water that tasted great. The generator only had one problem, fixed quickly by the vendor, and this year our friends from 8-bit Bunny and Camp Beaverton got all trained up on generator maintenance which meant there were plenty of people taking care of keeping it humming.

And food. And drinks! Both, again, amazing, as usual. I know the food team works their balls off. That's how food is, apparently--I've seen The Bear. Getting a Playa Michelin Star is not for the faint of heart, but we got our second star this year. Thanks to Chef Christophe and the entire team that helped him get it done, and all our spectactular chefs.

Crikey Strikey. This was the Best. Strike. Ever. Our new Strike Czar (or, Strike Emir, if you prefer) Effendi led a smooth and pleasant demolition of the camp over two perfect days. The only trace we left was a piece of canvas stuck under the wheels of the pillow fort -- and my friend from Gerlach with the unlikely name "Public Menace" swung by afterwards to remove it for us.

We had glorious art, with Klajdi's strollers, and architecture, with the new Turtle Pavilion (not the Turtle Erection!), composed of elegant and graceful sails that were no match for the weather, but never mind -- that is the point of Burning Man. We had heroic rescues, great photography, emotional ups and downs, and lots of new turtles, who, I am told, were all simply delightful. I truly apologize that I was too busy to notice them and they all blended in my mind into a splendid ghee suitable for making pancakes.

We have this thing where some people came to Burning Man expecting certain things to work in certain ways and specific fashions, and then Burning Man laughs at their plans, and they are shocked, even dismayed, maybe even saddened, and they are, probably, weeks later, realizing that there is some lesson in there, although it may not be a flattering one, but a lesson it is. I recognize this happening to you because this is what happened to me on my sophomore year, where, having been at Burning Man all of one time, I was utterly confident that I had a very specific hour-by-hour plan of the awesome way Burning Man 2.0 would unfold (ha!ha!) and you can guess where that ended up.

There are many people to thank for a great year on playa. Thanks to Adam and Tristan for the pillow fort, Alejandro for the truck and a million other lovely things, Coachella Alex for build, drinks, and LNT, the other Alex for transportation and bikes and taking everyone's GARBAGE to the DUMP, DJ Alex for food and music, Ben and Basil for Gaywatch and hard work during build, Coachella Ben and Coachella Matty for incredibly high spirits and hard work and for not even knowing that you don't have to enjoy the bad weather, it's acceptable just to endure it; DJ Ben for music and guardianship and opening and closing ceremonies that gave it all meaning, Benny for food and leading the night shift, Coachella Charlie for acting like this was all pretty reasonable and fun, Coachella Chris for being a shiny beacon, Christophe for powering through the sophomore slump and making great food happen, Dat for building, Dimi for playing bananagrams with me and taking me to shabbat to say kaddish, Coachella Ed for joining build on his very first burn and cooking a lot

of the meals for us, Effendi for making Strike great, Fotis, Morgan, and the Guardians for saving Coachella Hsiang, Coachella Hsiang for showing people how to bounce back, Gary for designing the Turtle Pavillion and endless hard work during build, Coachella Jack and Coachella Michael for always volunteering, Jeremy for methodically and patiently taking care of audio and lights, Jihoon and Jorge for guardianing, Coachella John for literally reinventing what it means to fluff, Space Master for being the only person as obsessive as I am about putting things (but never people!) in their place, Klajdi for build and art, Kyle for always being up to help, Coachella Milo for helping with infrastructure and, together with Space Master, filling out log books in a way that, frankly, were so careful that it made me cry a little bit from happiness when I read them, Peter for being my playa rock and best friend, who, as the only other turtle besides me to make it every year since 2018, most exemplifies the spirit of the turtles and got every party to happen even when people were confused about how this could possibly be possible; Coachella Phillip who brought art to 7:00, Romain who got volunteers shifted, Scott who came for build and was a great friend to many, Axle who dragged that fucking food truck yet again, with endless challenges but ultimately no problems, Shuai who made beautiful music and drew crowds to Tarot readings, and Coachella Will who was always up to a challenge. I know I'm forgetting people and this is only the tip of the iceberg but the bottom line is that I love every one of you and you all nailed it this year. Outside of the camp, thanks to our neighbors, especially at Camp Beaverton and 8-bit who helped with the generator, and to a few turtle-adjacent who don't camp with us, like Neptune, PB, and Mike, who nevertheless do a ton of work in camp--thank you!

I snuck out of camp on Monday to finish my Ranger training and am now qualified as a shiny penny: a brand new ranger. I found that I enjoy rangering when I am rangering people I don't know (non turtles, that is), in other words, I am a Stranger Ranger, but rangering turtles is not fun to me so I will leave that up to the Guardians.

We had, gosh, 15 new campers out of 43? I think that's right. That is a lot of newbies learning the ropes which is normal but one thing I saw is that some stuff that we used to do really well (like deal with our trash) was collectively forgotten. Nobody seemed to understand how to stack the plates or sort trash. That is NOT any new turtles' fault; it more reflects the fact that camp leadership or more specifically me did not take into account what needed to be done to transmit the culture. BTW next year there will be a moop czar (please volunteer now! You're reading this!) and we'll get it together. What I'm realizing is that the camp has a certain natural turnover that results in lost knowledge. On the plus side that means we are a Learning Engine but on the negative side that means we have a Terminal Velocity -- a maximum amount of knowledge and sophistication that we can reach in any given year about How To Do Burning Man.

I also recognize that it's hard to join a big group of new people, make friends, and feel at home right away in the first year.

Let me wax on that for a minute. We, as a camp, try to strike a balance. Our intent is to treat turtles as independent adults making their own decisions. As a camp, we're not a Scout Troop or an Afterschool Religious Ministry or even a College Frat where the Adults In Charge are Responsible for some kind of Emotional and Intellectual Journey of the campers. Unlike summer camp, we don't try to program your day or tell you what to do or where to go or how to feel about it. We are just here to hold space for people to have their own burning man transformational experience and then

we offer to be there as a group of friends after you have those experiences.

So sometimes I hear people saying that our camp seems to lack some of the kumbaya woo woo or the trust falls and group marshmallow roasting confessions that other camps might do, and I say huzzah, yeah, that's intentional, they are wonderful but we don’t have them.

Or maybe people are confused because there is not enough structure and they don't know what to do or who to listen to or how to build or strike something or who is supposed to be In Charge, and I actually think that is on purpose and intentional: a part of the Burning Man principle of radical self reliance, maybe, but even more a part of treating you as adult humans with agency, not a Boy Scout club and certainly not an army platoon.

But. We are meant to be creating and holding space for stuff, and a part of that is making sure that turtles feel like when they are coming back to camp after a night out they are coming into a place with friends whom they know. And I am confident we do that very well by the second year, but for new turtles, my very sensitive Village Auntie barometer is telling me that we need to do more. So beginning next year one change we will make is more activities to insure that new turtles make friends, even if they do seem kumbaya.

Finally. Omens.

It has rained three out of three years. We currently build our camp using the assumption that it Will Not Rain. That means we make certain build choices that are terrible if it rains on the theory that Rain Is Very Rare. One example is tarps on the ground, which help with the dust a little bit when it doesn't rain, but are much, much worse when it does rain. Good bye, ground tarps.

Another example is using a simple black rock shade structure for our dining area, which is fine, unless it rains, in which case, it's almost worse than nothing. We should get one of those enclosed, weatherproof event tents.

This year a ton of stuff was just destroyed by the weather and that is an omen that it is time to rethink and rebuild. Instead of starting with last year as the starting point, this year we're going to actually start with a blank slate design for the camp. Instead of carrying forward inertia, assumptions, or outdated projects, we're going to reinvent and justify everything we build, do, and gift in our camp. It's kinda crazy, right? Yeah I know.

2024 Afterburner Report

In 1990 a small caravan of cars containing members of the Cacophony Society, together with Larry Harvey, and a truck with a wooden man in it, pulled off of Nevada 447 into the desert. And when they hit the dry lake bed we call playa, they stopped and got out to look around. As Michael Mikel (Danger Ranger) told the story, "I took a stick, and I drew a line on the ground, and I had everybody line up. And I said, 'On the other side of this line, everything will be different. Reality itself will change.' We all stepped across that line together, and things *have* been different."

That crossing-of-the-line-in-the-desert theme has been a significant touchstone of the Burning Man experience since 1990. Many greeters use it to greet burgins as they arrive on playa. It speaks to how Burning Man is a great transformational experience, not just a festival, or an event, or a city.



Klajdi Tsano's untitled art piece on playa this year, the first placed art by any Turtle, was deliberately lit only from one side and as such immediately creates a line in the desert so that when you step through the piece, everything is different. The work, like all good Burning Man art, invites you to participate and to contemplate what crossing a line means to you. What were you

before? What are you now? "By amplifying this simple act of cutting, the installation seeks to evoke a sense of the sublime and the uncanny, prompting visitors to reflect on their own place within the vast desert landscape," Klajdi wrote.

Turtles hit their stride

This was, by all accounts, an easy year to do Burning Man.

Tickets were easy to get. The weather was great. Things just worked. Alot of the things we've been putting in place have finally all come together to make a camp that is a pleasure to be a part of.

I've been having a little bit of trouble getting started on this Afterburner report. We spend 8,832 hours on playa collectively, and I can capture only a fraction of that in this inadequate report.

Oh, did I mention? We're, like, *popular* now. Somehow everybody knows about the Turtles and comes to all our parties. And boy did we have some great ones!

Doing an **opening night party** as soon as the gates open at midnight is a great idea. There is literally nothing else going on, and the entire queerborhood and everyone that had been busy building their camps showed up. It was great timing this year as the bus with most of our camp had literally pulled up just a few minutes before midnight.

The Monday night **kink party** was probably the biggest hit of the week, not just for the Turtles, but for the entire neighborhood. It was a huge blowout signature party and many only-at-Burning-Man stories are still being told about that party.

Our Thursday night **mud party** was a throwback to last year's 18 hour epic mudpocalypse party, and featured mud wrestling, mud outfits, and general mud appreciation.

Finally on Saturday afternoon we hosted a great **Wardrobe Malfunction** party which was a nice way to close out the week.

All of our parties were big neighborhood hits and I'm glad the queerborhood now knows us and sees us as a fun place to hangout. I really feel that with our corner location, our hub, and our reputation, we are now fully qualified as an anchor camp of the queerborhood... and the fact that we can do that with just 43 turtles is a testament to how great our camp is.

Other interactivity

Shuai taught people how to Shuffle, Jihoon did Tarot readings, and Tristan led two popular yoga sessions. Oh, and we apparently hosted a delightful tomahawk steak and crab dinner for some stupid camp down the road, and actually hosted extra parties that you probably didn't even notice with amazing guest DJs from nearby camps Gymnasium, Paradise Motel, and Dusty Frogz.

We also learned that having a "24/7 play space" is not going to work unless you staff it 24/7. We did a quick course-correction and decided that can only be open to the public when there are a couple of turtles at the door getting people to enthusiastically commit to practice consent. After this correction, we decided the Pillow Fort would only be open to the public during our parties when it could be staffed and monitored.

Food

We had some really insanely superb meals this year; probably the best food we've *ever* had on playa. I don't think any other camp eats as well as we do, not even the fancy plug-and-play camps with celebrity paid chefs. Kudos goes to Future Turtles MVP Benny Bergon who organized the whole thing, with along with celebrity chefs Jon, AlexSF, Christophe, MJ, AlexW, Spacemaster, Romain, Dimitri, Kevin, and Alejandro who blew us away twice a day.

A working camp

Sometimes you're at a party where most of the attendees are standing around, taking a sip out of a can of White Claw, maybe then leaving the rest of the can perched on the edge of a table for the Can Fairy to clean up.

But you notice that there are a couple of people there who are running around doing things. They might be getting people drinks, throwing away trash, making guacamole in the kitchen, futzing with the playlist, or even just introducing newcomers and showing them where the hot tub is.

And in fact those are the people you want to be your friends. Because when you go on vacations with them, you're not going to be the only one cleaning up and you're not going to be the one at 5 pm worrying about where dinner is coming from and you're not going to live in a pile of trash and have to order pizza at 9:58pm from the last place open in town.

That's the principle of the Turtles. We surround ourselves by people who like to make things and do things and who take responsibility for everything they see around them. Through our Reno work weekends, everybody gets a chance to work on preparing the camp for another year. Our build team consists of ridiculously hard-working turtles that spend an extra four days in the Black Rock Desert preparing the camp for everyone's arrival. Members of the food team arrived a few days early in Nevada to get the food fort ready, filled with propane, repaired and fully stocked with food. Some turtles took it upon themselves to organize a truck from San Francisco to bring our stuff in and our trash out and then did the extra work to make spare space available for friends and neighbors. People contributed by designing and creating great parties, great lighting, camp signage, an electrical grid that works so well we just gift electricity to four neighboring camps, ice, ice water, drinks, snacks, a fresh water system and grey water pumping, organizing the Turtle Bus, creating our new kink space; they contributed by keeping the Gayflower sparkly clean and decorated with hilarious signage, by dealing with garbage and even composting this year, which had to be *dried out*, by keeping our fleet of bikes in good repair, by organizing the tool fort so we

can find things, by setting up an incredible sound system and creating great DJ sets, by creating (and cleaning) the magical pillow fort and keeping it safe, by greeting people coming to our parties and getting their goddamn bikes off the street so the party doesn't get shut down, by manifesting the spirit of the mud party through mud wrestling, the wardrobe malfunction party through wardrobe malfunctions, and the kink party through... well, you've already heard about that. In fact what makes the Turtles work as such an amazing camp is the fact that so many turtles went so far above and beyond to make amazing things happen in camp.

This is not the camp for everyone. A completely reasonable way to camp at Burning Man is to bring a tent and a cooler with some food and spend your whole burn outside of camp. Other people might prefer to camp with a slightly less manically industrious group of people, which is fine too.



Camping and Art

One night this year, I found myself, for some reason, at a camp that was running a party of some sort, only the generator had gone off, so the party didn't even have music, which made the costumes people had brought for the party seem kind of strange and out of place. While everyone waited for "someone" to fix the generator and make the music start again, I was wondering what the heck I was doing there. So I left. And I blasted out on my bike to the nighttime playa, which, as you know by now, is the most incredible place on earth, something that doesn't exist anywhere else. Freedom, lights, childlike wonder, play, music, infinity, the best people on earth, house-sized

unicorns shooting flames, lasers, stars, airplanes shooting lasers at the stars, for miles and miles and miles. Why the fuck is anyone standing around waiting for disco music to come back on in their camp.

So now we have great *stuff* at the Future Turtles Theme Camp. We are a camp, which means we serve a residential function, a place to sleep, eat, wash, and get dressed. We are a part of the residential Black Rock City where we put on neighborhood block parties and other events to enrich Burning Man for our friends and neighbors. We have 43 incredibly charming turtles who you should make friends with if you are not already. So that's great.

But now that we have that all squared away, it's important to remember the part of Black Rock City that is not just a fancy campground. It's the playa. The playa at night. The playa during the day. Monumental art. Art you can climb. Art that drives around. The insane, otherworldly, nowhere-else-on-earth feeling of blasting out into playa at night and seeing the spectacle of 1000 interesting life-changing things you can go visit, all lit by LEDs and flames.

The Future Turtles fifth adventure. In 2024, the line we crossed was Esplanade. Thanks to Klajdi's vision and hard work, and the willingness of other cheerful turtles to help him, we built art on the playa for the first time. The spell of Placement's urban planning was broken. We checked that box off our list, thoroughly and completely. It is time to stop fucking around by our tents and venture out to the pulsing heart of Burning Man.



2023 Afterburner Report

Best. Year. Ever!

Our fourth year, 2023 was the biggest year ever for the Future Turtles. We had the biggest camp and interactive area ever, more campers, more events and interactivity, and more participation than ever!

Not gonna lie, it was an interesting year weather-wise for Burning Man. You always expect the playa to throw something at you to make things difficult—whiteouts, dust, wind, heat, locusts—we just hadn't known that hurricanes were a thing we should watch out for.

This year the remains of Hurricane Hilary kept Black Rock City closed for the first two days of build week. That meant that the early build team was stuck in Reno, playing VR games and escaping escape rooms and hanging out by the pool in the casino, for two days, when we should have been building.

Luckily, when we did arrive, the weather was beyond perfect. It was not too hot, not windy at all, and there was absolutely no dust, which meant that we could build the camp in record time. Simple things like staking down tarps, which had taken hours in the windy conditions of 2022, were trivial.

With the help of some Friday and Saturday early arrivals, we got everything built on time by Saturday night. As planned, we held our antenna-lighting and build-closing-ceremony when the gates to the city officially opened at midnight Saturday, and hosted the first party of the neighborhood as Burning Man participants started pouring into Black Rock City.

Reno Preparations

Everything was made easier by the incredible amount of advance preparation work we had done in Reno in the spring. During that time we had:

- assembled 50 new bicycles
- set up a tool fort container so all our tools and supplies were easy to find
- painted beautiful murals on the side of our two new containers
- repaired and maintained all our lighting, DJ equipment, tools, and generators
- built strong decks on top of the new containers which created an amazing new upper-level observation space
- built the new camp water distribution system
- and a million other little tasks to get ready for playa.

Some Infrastructure Improvements

We love the smaller size of the Future Turtles camp. We don’t want to be a big institution. We want to keep the quality of the campers high and make sure we have a camp where everyone feels at home and knows and trusts each other. That means we have decided that anything we do to increase the program and do more on playa needs to be done in a way that does not require more shifts, more work from individual turtles, or just adding more strangers to the camp. That was the focus of all our infrastructure improvements. We got new storage containers. We bought new camp bicycles. And we put down tarps on the ground in the camper tent area, making that area much cleaner and even helping when it rained. On Tuesday morning we received the Gayflower, which arrived as a gift from friends at Rootpile, accompanied by bluegrass music.

We also got the Food Fort, a kitchen trailer. It has large walk in fridge and ice maker and a huge cooktop. This allows us to feed the camp to a standard we have never had before with less work. The food team had spent the year competing to come up with great recipes and all of the meals were pretty amazing by any standard. Best of all, the air conditioned trailer allows us to tow the kitchen in, complete with enough refrigerated and frozen food for the week, from Reno, instead of having to build a kitchen in the dust.

The public décor of the camp keeps getting better and better. We brought back camper cubbies and improved the dining area. We had new, magical, lights, rugs, cushions, a huge decorated backdrop for the DJ, tapestries, better seating areas for the public, a dressing room for the pillow fort, air conditioning for the cuddle fort, a second bar for non-alcoholic drinks, better shade, two observation decks, and more.

The Event

The first five days of the event were picture perfect. The shared hardship of rushing to build the city had created a sense of accomplishment and camaraderie. The weather conditions continued to be pretty excellent. Even when it got windy, the previous rains had packed the playa dust enough that the wind didn’t bring the usual whiteout conditions. And the playa itself was solid and packed perfectly so biking was incredibly easy compared to 2022.

At the Future Turtles, we were excited to discover just how much our new location on the corner of 7:00 and Encantado was a huge boon. This was the first time we had been on an avenue corner and it meant we had way more foot traffic to all our events. Our location, literally at the epicenter of the queerborhood, was ideal. We were near a lot of other things (like Comfort & Joy, the Pink Gym, the Orgy Dome, and all the LGBTQIA+ camps around us) that fit nicely with our interactive offerings. By the end of the week, our neighbors had figured out that the Pillow Fort is a much nicer, more intimate alternative to Afterglow.

We ran several well-attended parties: our welcome sunset party on Sunday, a Naked Pub Crawl event Wednesday afternoon, and our Queer Ritmo Night on Thursday for Spanish speakers. All of these parties benefited greatly from the central location and our cool new observation decks. Our DJ team this year was amazing, with four turtles who had learned to DJ in the last year joining. We love the fact that when you come to a party at the Future Turtles you’ll be hanging out with turtles, listening to turtles’ spin, and interacting with turtle bartenders.

The daily morning HIIT workouts continue to be a hit (get it? Ha-ha) with more attendees than ever, in a larger, shaded space with tarps on the ground and new, creative, fun exercises, along with the usual smoothies. Those are popular with both turtles and visitors who appreciated the earlier start time (10 am) when it's a bit cooler.

On Wednesday morning we all woke up before dawn (those of us that hadn't stayed up all night, at least), and headed out to the art car Titanic's End, where, as the sun rose, we celebrated the engagement of two of our campmates.

This was also the year that we inaugurated a smaller interactive space meant for streetside encounters. It hosted the Turtle Minibar (a bar with enough room for about two patrons), our daily Storygami workshop, Ürkish Coffee fortunetelling, and a burn barrel. The smaller space made it possible to make intimate connections with passers-by right at the street that might have been harder to draw into our main space. One night we even opened an impromptu grilled-cheese station when the lines at Mooncheese just seemed too long and we realized we could whip up grilled cheese sandwiches for ourselves—and anyone else passing by—without waiting in line.

Mudpocalypse

OK, yeah, then it rained.

On Friday morning it started. And BMIR kept saying, yeah this will only be another hour or so, but they kept saying that every hour and pretty soon it was Saturday morning and it was *still*> raining and the camp was basically flooded and we were told to "shelter in place." Driving and cycling became impossible, and even walking was difficult due to the muddy conditions. We were concerned that we didn't know when the rain would stop, when the sun would return, and how long it would take for the playa to dry out so we could get moving again.

In the meantime, apparently, the world media had some kind of bizarre collective hallucination and was reporting that some kind of Fyre Festival dystopia was happening, so our friends and families off-playa started worrying, even though nothing could have been further from the truth. In fact, we had too much food, as usual, people were having a great time, and burners universally helped each other out, taking in people whose tents had flooded. Despite the fact that the news seemed to think some kind of Katrina-style FEMA evacuation was underway, Burning Man continued, although the difficulty in riding bicycles meant it became a little more local and felt a little more small-scale, like the Burning Man of the 90s.

Around Saturday afternoon we realized the Man Burn was not happening that night. Many of the camps in the neighborhood had decided that Burning Man Was Over and were slipping around in the mud trying desperately to pack up. We decided just to wait for everything to dry before we packed up, calculating (correctly) that would be much easier. Why not turn on the music?

Our Mudpocalypse Disco started around 2pm and people started peeking in wondering what the heck was going on.

As the afternoon went on, our party rapidly grew more popular. By nightfall, our entire space was crammed with hundreds of people, and spilled all the way out in front of the camp to the street. Both observation decks were full of happy burners dancing. We announced that we would go until 2am, but the crowds did not abate. Around 2:00 we told the attendees that we would continue if they would do a moop sweep, which they did, and then we partied through until sunrise, concluding with an epic sunrise set. All told it was about 18 hours of nonstop happiness that left the turtles, and most of the neighborhood, having just witnessed the best party ever in the history of parties.



Strike

Our original hope had been to strike on Sunday and be done by Monday morning. In fact, waiting for the sun to come out meant that strike happened about 24 hours late. Fortunately, some turtles were able to delay their departures to help, which made a big difference. We do feel like we were able to do a decent job of drying everything out so that it doesn't develop mildew (fingers crossed). And we did hours of moop sweeping, although the mud this year has us worried that there is probably a lot of hidden moop folded into the hard mud piles that were beaten down by foot traffic.

On Sunday night, lacking a Man burn, we decided to burn our own wood Turtle effigy, which had adorned our space all week.

On Monday night the org announced that the Man would finally burn. This was the first time since 1990 that the Man burned so late. The dozen-odd turtles that were still here for strike headed out

to playa. The experience was surreal; by this time, most of the city was gone, and the roads were ripped to shreds. But on playa, it was still Burning Man. There was a full complement of art cars in a ring around the Man, the fire conclaves were doing their thing, a lot of the playa art was lit up and in good shape, and the party was in full swing. Thanks to DaveX and his crew we were treated to possibly a beautiful array of fireworks—orders of magnitude better than anything Burning Man has ever seen!

The People

People describe Burning Man as “contrived hardship” intended to build community. Well, I don’t know how much of it is contrived, but the community of turtles that was built out of the hardship of the rain and mud could not be stronger.

This was the year that every turtle, both new and returning, really stepped up to contribute in a big way. The crew this year really understood the ten principles in ways both large and small. Turtles volunteered as a group for Lamplighters. Others volunteered individually for other things on playa, helping out with Placement, other artist’s art projects, and more. Others built interactive projects and art independently with beautiful results.

We came together for each other when things got hard, and helped each other have a terrific burn. The number of turtles who really understood the principle of do-ocracy and just *did things* to make camp better, to create gifts for turtles and burners, and to make shit happen without waiting to be told, made this our strongest year yet.

2022 Afterburner Report

We went home!

For the 36 turtles who came to Black Rock City this year, it was an incredible year.

The conditions were… hard. Burning Man is always hard, but this year was worse than usual. The weather was hotter. There were more dust storms and whiteouts, which always seemed to be at the least convenient times (the build team put up most of the camp in super windy whiteout conditions). The things that we depend on the Burning Man organization to get right (roads, ice, fuel, gate and exodus) … were not right.

As a camp, we had doubled in size, and a majority of us (24) had never been to Burning Man before. We were way more ambitious in terms of the camp we built, the interactive programs we put on, the quality of the food we made, and a lot more.

There was a ton of work, but we were ready for it, and we got it all done. Everybody pitched in, even the sparkly newbies, so, thank you, sparkly newbies.

Advance Work

One of the things that made Burning Man easy this year was a large amount of work that was done in advance to get ready. We had two work weekends in Reno getting all our gear cleaned, sorted, and ready to go. Our San Francisco turtles built a beautiful wood bar and DJ booth that will serve us for years to come.

Early Build Week

The early build team converged in Reno a full week before the start of the event. We loaded trucks and unboxed new gear, and bought a lot of supplies, before heading to playa and arriving at a city that was still mostly empty. We could see the Man from our tents because the entire area from Esplanade to D was unbuilt.

For the first night, our priority was just to build our own tents so we had a place to sleep. Unfortunately, at about 2am, a major wind storm swept through our little camp. We had built a minimal shade structure without side tarps, which became something of a sail in the wind. Unprotected by tarps, the Shiftpods started to blow away.

After a few minutes we realized that we had to wake up, find masks and goggles, and rebuild the entire camp, in the midst of an incredible windstorm and whiteout conditions, and make it much stronger so we could go to sleep again. Which is what we did.

The whiteout and windy conditions continued for much of build week. There were some breaks, but most of the week was incredibly difficult. Try to imagine spreading out a 14 x 48 canvas tarp on the ground in 20mph winds and getting it nailed down to the playa smoothly… now do that six times.

By the third evening on playa we had assembled enough infrastructure to shower off (with a garden hose and kiddie pool), finally, which was probably the highlight of build week. Even though we got dusty again 20 seconds later, it was nice to get clean for a minute.

Late Build Week

Deliveries started arriving at our camp site: a big generator shared with Gender Blender and 8-bit Bunny, the two trailers with all our gear, an insane amount of produce which we stuffed into our limited refrigerators, ten cases of corn on the cob we never ordered, a big tank of water that we used up in two days, a big empty tank for grey water, and two porto-potties. The camp started to take shape.

Meanwhile more turtles were arriving in Reno trying to gather up and pack the rest of the gear we needed: huge amounts of food and groceries, an insane amount of liquor, an annoying trailer with three dozen bicycles, and every other little thing that could not be obtained on playa.

Arrivals

Most turtles take the Burner Bus Express… we love this because you don’t have to wait in huge lines to enter and exit the event. People trickled in on Saturday, Sunday, and as late as Monday, but everyone made it in time for our big kick-off party Monday night.

Our location, in the middle of a block, did not have much traffic walking by, so our events were for the most part attended by neighbors who noticed our incredible DJs and our attractive camp, or people who had heard about the legendary turtles and who came to see what everyone was talking about.

Desert HiiT Workouts

It seems unlikely when the temperatures are in the upper 90s, but we had plenty of takers for our daily 11:00am high intensity interval training workouts. We took this a lot more seriously than some of you may remember from 2019. All the exercises were done in pairs which added a nice social element. People got a real workout, and a lot of them kept coming back throughout the week; on some days our space was at capacity.

A real music program

With two great resident DJs, several guest DJs, and even a couple of newbies learning the ropes, we always had great music. Our sound system with six big speakers sounded **amazing** in the clear

desert air.

It’s always hard to find and play the kind of music that everyone likes, but our DJs did it. I was pretty astonished to have multiple people come up to me and say that they love, love, loved **all** the music … including several people whose musical tastes I know to be completely non-overlapping.

We had a very specific vibe in mind at the Future Turtles: cheerful, progressive, melodic house, one strict rule (“no pop!”) and the intent that you should never hear anything that you’ve heard in the real world before—the idea was that you should never hear a “song” that you recognized that reminded you of the default world, because Burning Man is most powerful when you can get absorbed in the alien world and never get yanked back to the default.

Turtle Tea Thursday (Listen on Soundcloud)

Great Food

With so many burners subsisting on granola bars and gifted pickles, we actually got a huge delivery of fresh produce and produced two amazing, nutritious hot meals a day, with options for vegans and unlimited snacks available 24/7. Our team of designated chefs (with the assistance of literally everyone, who did one or two kitchen shifts) produced food that was consistently healthy and tasty and really kind of astonishing given the conditions in which it was produced.

Bar

We had an organized bar with a full drinks program including premixed alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails every evening. We were surprised to find how popular the non-alcoholic options were.

Everything was super tasty. We even had everything we needed to make custom drinks for people (if we liked them enough, of course). Another huge highlight of the drinks program was Jorge’s cold brew coffee every morning.

Oh man, that Pillow Fort

Thanks the creative design of Oscar with tons of help from Andre and other turtles, we created what was probably the most magical space on the entire playa, a quiet, soft, air-conditioned underwater aquarium space that was dedicated to naps during the day (to catch up on sleep) and adult activities during the night. With magical dayglo decorations, Arduino-controlled black light animations creating a “wave” effect, magical music and even a scent program, the pillow fort was truly a spectacular new feature of the camp.

I've been talking about a lot of stuff. Burning Man is about the people.



To be honest it’s easy to get wrapped up in describing our infrastructure, but the whole camp would have sucked if we didn’t have such great people. And there’s no way to sum up the life-transforming experiences of 36 lovely turtles—heck, there’s no way even to convey the insane experiences we all had.

We saw a glimpse of the greatest work of collaborative art ever created in the history of mankind, an artwork created in the audacious medium of a civilization, cooperatively created by 70,000 untrained artists.

We danced, and we slept through dances.

We explored, and we missed 95% of what there was to find.

We faffed, but we got there.

We learned how much more we are capable of than we thought, and we also learned how to ask our neighbors for help.

We fucked up massively, but we always got our shit together.

We were together. We had moments of insanely painful loneliness.

We apologized for past mistakes, and made new ones.

We felt the greatest joy we had ever felt, but also cried our hearts out.

We found love, and lost love.

We were transformed.

2026 Afterburner Report

Afterburner reports are here