

Simon Elisha ([00:00](#)):

Good day everyone. The official AWS Podcast is super excited that re:Invent 2023 is almost here. Now, we're going to give you recap coverage of all the keynotes starting on Monday the 27th of November with Peter DeSantis keynote all the way through to Thursday the 30th of November with Werner Vogel's keynote and starting in December, we'll begin doing deep dives into all the most important releases, giving lots of insights and hints about how you can use all the cool new things that we learn about. Looking forward to it.

([00:32](#)):

Hello everyone, and welcome back to The AWS Podcast, a summer issue with you. Great to have you back and of course, I'm joined by Jillian Forde. Good day Jillian.

Jillian Forde ([00:38](#)):

Good day. This is a fun one.

Simon Elisha ([00:39](#)):

Yeah, we're talking a different topic today. We're going to talk about how to re:Invent for 2023-

Jillian Forde ([00:44](#)):

I wish I had this, the first time.

Simon Elisha ([00:46](#)):

Well, this is the gift we're giving to others. Now a quick programming note as I mentioned on another episode, I'm recording this while recovering from a allergic reaction that affected my tongue, so I don't sound exactly normal, but it's me, not you, is how I put it. So AWS re:Invent has happened every year since I want to say 2013, something like that. 2012 even.

Jillian Forde ([01:09](#)):

Wow. 10 years. What?

Simon Elisha ([01:10](#)):

It's been a lot. It's been a lot. I remember being at the very first re:Invent and there was a whole 7,000 people there.

Jillian Forde ([01:17](#)):

Wow.

Simon Elisha ([01:18](#)):

It was different, but there was definitely something going on. So our intent on this episode today is to help folks who A, are going to re:Invent and who maybe haven't gone before and want to know how to get the most out of it, but B, those of us who aren't going to re:Invent but want to enjoy it and get the most out of it as well and the great news is you don't have to go there to get a lot of the benefits. So we're going to kind of talk about that, aren't we, Jillian?

Jillian Forde ([01:41](#)):

That's right, but if you are, I mean, there's a lot of things that I think maybe between both of us, our experience are not really obvious, but if you do some of these things, I think you'll just really maximize your experience.

Simon Elisha ([01:55](#)):

Totally. Totally. So firstly, in terms of some mechanics, my number one tip for re:Invent is not related to the conferences, not related to the events, it's ChapStick. When you get-

Jillian Forde ([02:08](#)):

Oh my god, I thought you were going to say sneakers. That was my...

Simon Elisha ([02:10](#)):

Ah, that's a good one too.

Jillian Forde ([02:11](#)):

That's a good one, but I-

Simon Elisha ([02:15](#)):

You get to do yours next. But I learned this the hard way because Vegas is really, really dry and then you're in air conditioning all the time.

Jillian Forde ([02:21](#)):

Oh, yes. That's so true.

Simon Elisha ([02:22](#)):

First thing I buy off the plane, ChapStick. It's a winner. So you're saying sneakers tell us about sneakers?

Jillian Forde ([02:28](#)):

Sneakers. I mean, you are going to be walking around. I don't care what hotel you're staying in, their sessions are all over the place. Make sure you wear something comfortable. If they're sneakers don't have them be sneakers that you are breaking in for the first time because you're going to do a ton of steps.

Simon Elisha ([02:46](#)):

Have you ever looked at how many steps you do a day during re:Invent?

Jillian Forde ([02:49](#)):

Oh my gosh, it's like at least over 10,000. I mean, it's easily.

Simon Elisha ([02:54](#)):

I think I've done about 25,000 normally on a bad day because the event doesn't take place in just one building. It's at the Encore, at The Win, at The Venetian, at Caesars Forum, MGM Grand and Mandalay Bay and now you're not walking between all these, there are shuttles. It's actually really nice to get to and from. The team does an amazing job getting you around, but you're right, you have to plan to move

and plus then there's of course just the expo floor as well is fascinating to explore. Have you spent much time visiting folks on the expo floor?

Jillian Forde ([03:24](#)):

Oh yeah. I love seeing all the different vendors that are there. It's just a great way to network with people maybe at where people are getting coffee and water.

Simon Elisha ([03:34](#)):

Yeah, I think one of the interesting parts about re:Invent, and we'll talk about the session shortly, but it's the non session stuff that's really, really interesting. The cafes and the pubs are literally heaving with people and they're all talking about IT and they're all talking about cloud and technology and the thing that really gets me is you walk along and they're like, "Oh, there's this famous person. Oh, there's that person I've seen on a million videos. Oh, there's someone who's really been around for a long time, is super smart." Just having a chat with general people. It's a real melting pot.

Jillian Forde ([04:08](#)):

It really is and also people that you never would've met. I've met people who are using AWS in Columbia and some people in Japan. I was like, "Wow, I never would've met these people."

Simon Elisha ([04:18](#)):

It's so true. It's so true. You just get to see lots of people and a lot of colleagues and ex-colleagues catch up as well. There's a very convivial thing. So don't just think it's about the sessions themselves. You're going to get a lot just from those accidental meetings with people. People often say, "Hey, are you going to be at re:Invent? I want to catch up with you," et cetera. It just becomes a nice meeting spot.

Jillian Forde ([04:38](#)):

A hundred percent.

Simon Elisha ([04:40](#)):

What about the outside of session things? What are some of those things that you like? Do you do, because there's the gaming stuff. I think like the video games, there's a lot of extracurricular stuff.

Jillian Forde ([04:50](#)):

Oh, that stuff's fun. The 5K Run, I know a lot of people when I say that, they're like the 5K run really? You want to wake up in the morning and run, but it's actually really fun. They plan out a really cool course. You meet other crazy people who want to go out and run during the week of re:Invent and it's just a great place to meet people and you can also walk. So for those who are like, "I'm not a runner," you've got no excuses.

Simon Elisha ([05:18](#)):

Oh, you have plenty of excuses. It's Vegas. It's all about excuses for Vegas.

Jillian Forde ([05:24](#)):

That is true.

Simon Elisha ([05:25](#)):

And there is of course the replay party that's on the Thursday.

Jillian Forde ([05:28](#)):

Oh, that's always fun.

Simon Elisha ([05:28](#)):

Yeah, it's really cool. There'll be two stages with seven acts throughout the night and I'm old so I don't understand the bands anymore, but our live stage will be headlined by Grammy winning band, Portugal. The Man, and-

Jillian Forde ([05:41](#)):

I don't know that either.

Simon Elisha ([05:42](#)):

Called Portugal. The man. I've read that wrong. It shows how old I am, and there'll also be performance by the Linda Lindas, Colony House and King Youngblood. And on the main stage there'll be the Grammy nominated A-Trak and DJ Headliner will close out the party. Now there have been some very cool headliners that go to these events.

Jillian Forde ([05:42](#)):

Yes.

Simon Elisha ([06:02](#)):

It's legit.

Jillian Forde ([06:03](#)):

Oh yeah. I remember when I was there a few years ago, they had Skrillex and that was just amazing. So definitely you want to make sure you pace yourself. There's a lot of events that are going on during the night, but you want to make it to Replay. It's really fun.

Simon Elisha ([06:19](#)):

It is. It is fun. There's lots of goodies there and games and other cool stuff.

Jillian Forde ([06:23](#)):

And yeah, quirky games too. Games that you would never see and play anywhere else. Like that game where there's the dodge ball and the big ball that you kind of kick around that's like soccer. It's ridiculous, but it's so cool.

Simon Elisha ([06:36](#)):

Yeah, there's lots of fun stuff. Now let's talk keynotes because people are often really excited to see what's coming, what's going on. And so obviously Adam, Selipsky will do his keynote on the Tuesday and that's where he's going to give a really detailed view of things that are going on, things that are coming, things that have been happening with some great customer speakers. Peter DeSantis does what we call I

guess Monday Night Live, which is basically where it's a nighttime keynote, which is a bit unusual. It goes from 7:30 and we tend to really get into the geeky stuff there, don't we, Jillian? It's kind of more under the covers of the technology.

Jillian Forde ([07:11](#)):

Yeah, it definitely is, but of course if you decide to miss it, you can always listen to our episodes where we're going to cover what gets covered in those keynotes.

Simon Elisha ([07:21](#)):

This is true. This is true, we will be recording each and every keynote as in not the keynote itself, but that will be available for later, but we will be giving our summary of the keynote, which is useful for those people in different time zones or you just couldn't attend it or what have you. So we'll do our best. So Jillian and I, we're sharing the heavy lifting during that week and we're going to sort of alternate. So you'll hear two different voices depending on the keynote. And speaking of keynotes, the other keynote will be from Swami around data and AI. That'll be a fascinating one and of course good mate, Werner will be talking about all things technology as well on the Thursday.

([07:58](#)):

So you get an amazing bit of content every day. Plus there's also a whole lot of announcements outside of the keynote as well, aren't there, Jillian? Just interesting stuff that gets released.

Jillian Forde ([08:08](#)):

Yeah, it's just such an exciting time. I think all these different innovations that are happening and are being announced and now just the buzz of what are the things that I can do now that this service or this feature has been launched that I couldn't have done before.

Simon Elisha ([08:23](#)):

Exactly, and of course then there are all the different sessions themselves and what are some hints about how to pick your sessions, because there's one or two?

Jillian Forde ([08:35](#)):

That is a tough question. Okay, if this was me, I'm sure a lot of you who are probably all in to generative AI and super curious about it, I think those sessions I would definitely sign up for and get to early, even though a lot of these sessions do have repeats, you still want to get there early because it is a hot topic and they definitely could very well fill up very quickly.

Simon Elisha ([09:01](#)):

And there is reserve seating now in some sessions too, so I'd check that out. That's something a little new, which is good.

Jillian Forde ([09:07](#)):

Oh, good call.

Simon Elisha ([09:07](#)):

And you're right, there are lots of repeat sessions for things that folks can't get into. One of the other things is there are different streams. So there's the networking stream, the AI stream, the security stream, et cetera. Don't just stick to your stream. You can of course move between different ones, but one of the great ways to do it is to firstly look at the code of the session. It uses university nomenclature, which is three characters for the stream and then a number and the first digit of the three digit number indicates the complexity level or the experience level expected. So you've got 1, 2, 3, 4. So if you're a beginner, you're looking at the ones and the twos. If you're an expert, you're looking at threes and fours. For example, there's Arc 3, 2, 4, demystifying a multi account strategy that's going to be pretty technical or FWM 401 build feature rich full stack apps with AWS, Amplify and App Sync.

[\(09:56\)](#):

So that's pretty full on type stuff as well. Whereas you can also have more basic topics or introductory topics that can sort of help you gently get into things as well. And one of the interesting things too is you'll often see sessions that have been run over multiple years but are refreshed with the latest and greatest thinking as well. So even if you've seen a session before, you may want to go to that session again because you may get more information. If I miss out, let's say I've got too many cool sessions on at the same time, Jillian, is that my only chance to get the content and what if I can't even go to re:Invent?

Jillian Forde ([10:28](#)):

That is a great question. I know that there are some sessions, and Simon, you probably know the answer to this one, but there are some that are actually recorded and so you can go and watch those on YouTube. Some of them like Chalk Talks for example, or workshops, those won't be recorded. So those ones you would want to prioritize to make sure you get the most for your experience, but Simon, what did you have in mind?

Simon Elisha ([10:49](#)):

If you don't get to go then pretty much every session, so every talk is recorded. The things that are interact or live activities and we'll talk about that surely aren't. So obviously they're the ones you want to go to if you're there because that's the only place you're going to get it, but you don't have to have a FOMO effect of, oh my goodness, I came to re:Invent, there were three sessions on it the one time that I wanted to go to, I had to prioritize one I missed out on the other. They're all there, but also as a non attendee, you still get access to all these things and I still access re:Invent talks from years past if they on a particular topic that's relevant. So you don't have to miss out. So you can be a little more selective when you're there about what you're choosing to go to.

Jillian Forde ([11:30](#)):

That's such a good call out.

Simon Elisha ([11:31](#)):

So we've got bootcamps which people go to. So these are typically full day events that people do to get skilled up very, very quickly in terms of what's going on. So often that is how folks will start their week. There's also different industry led events as well. So depending on the topic you're looking for, there's also something called Peer Talk and this allows you to connect with people who you'd like in your network but aren't necessarily in your network.

[\(11:58\)](#):

So I think that's a really interesting new way of getting in touch with folks. I've never used this before, this is something that's sort of more recent and it's basically allowing folks to connect with each other using technology because there's just so many folks. So I think it's an interesting one too, to sort of meet someone different, don't you think?

Jillian Forde ([12:14](#)):

I love that as an idea. I remember it last year, I saw some people there, they were mingling, but even if let's say you just don't have enough time to be able to do that and you want to prioritize the sessions, I never understood this, but start talking to the person before the session starts that's next to you. I mean, it's a great way to get to know someone else that's also interested in the same topic, works at a different company and great way to build your network.

Simon Elisha ([12:40](#)):

Yeah, it's very true and look, not all of us like socializing a lot, like for me, I'm not a socializing type person, so Vegas is my idea of a living hell, but you got to do it, but one thing I've always recommended to folks to sort of reduce that cognitive load on yourself and that emotional stress is to say that really the goal of any event like this is to my mind, if you can learn one new thing and meet one new person, that's a win. It's worth the price of admission.

Jillian Forde ([13:09](#)):

It takes the pressure off.

Simon Elisha ([13:11](#)):

Totally does, totally does. Now the nice thing is there are a bunch of events if you do want to mix with folks. So I'm just having a look here on the Tuesday, so that's the 28th. There are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 different networking receptions that have been run by different partners, et cetera. Then on the Wednesday, what do I see here? Just looking through Wednesday. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5 more sessions there. So you've got lots of cool stuff to do at all different events, different types of food, different types of experiences and one of the things with these networking receptions is it'll often help you again have that sort of birds of a feather type effect where someone who's going to go to a particular type of session is likely to have similar interests or similar challenges they're trying to deal with that would be worth talking to.

Jillian Forde ([13:58](#)):

A hundred percent and then one event I want to call out on the 29th is The Visionaries in the Stadium. That's actually at the Allegiant Stadium. It has its own landing page and registration, but it looks so cool. There's a generative AI panel. They've got the CEO of Cohere, the co-founder of Anthropic, partner at A16Z, a venture capital firm. So that's going to be super interesting.

Simon Elisha ([14:23](#)):

That's really, really nice, really nice. So it's choose your own adventure, but my recommendation is before you get on the plane, choose the adventure, start to figure it out, but then when you get there, be stubborn on the vision, but flexible on the detail. Change your schedule as you see things going on. You're going to meet people, talk to people, see things and go, "Oh, that'd be interesting. I just don't feel like going to that," or what have you. Don't be stressed about it, just have fun with it.

Jillian Forde ([14:50](#)):

A hundred percent and it's okay to, okay, I'm not going to go to a session, I'm going to take a nap or rest a little bit and then do some networking at night. People do that all the time.

Simon Elisha ([15:00](#)):

The two hour afternoon break slash siesta-

Jillian Forde ([15:03](#)):

Yes.

Simon Elisha ([15:03](#)):

Well underrated, let me tell you. Particularly, for folks like myself, time zone challenge when you get there. Actually, and that's a good reminder too, is that you want to probably pay more attention to what you're eating and drinking than normal just to feel okay. Drinking a lot of water helps. Again, this drying out motif. It's a thing. I think the last time I was at re:Invent, I got to the end of the week and I was like, "Oh my God, I haven't been outside for the entire week." I just wasn't outside. I was either in a hotel or in a bus.

Jillian Forde ([15:34](#)):

It's so easy too. Right.

Simon Elisha ([15:35](#)):

It's weird. It's weird. So after re:Invent, what happens after re:Invent? So a few different things and it depends where you are as well and how you tackle things, but certainly in Australia for example, we run re:Invent recap events where you get to go to a AWS facility and have some of the local essays present all of the things that were announced at re:Invent. It's a lot and it's great. So that's a great event to have happen there, but another approach is to kind of do a bit of a shop for yourself through the videos when they're released and go, well what's interesting, what should I look at, what do I need to see and one of the great joys if you like, at least from my perspective of watching these sessions on video is that firstly you can skip a lot of things. It may not be relevant to you.

([16:16](#)):

You can also watch it at the speed you want to watch it at. I like to watch people at one half speed, because it's just different and it is also really useful as things to set aside for later in the year. So what I mean by that is often you've got too much information to take in at one time, but you say, "Look, I'd really like to dive deep into how telemetry is working and what some of the technologies are around there, but I just don't have time now. So I'm going to dump a whole lot of links into a note for myself that's going to spring up in May," and suddenly May comes along. "Oh my god, I can look at all this stuff," and it just helps keep things fresh and you learn a lot of information, because I don't know about you Jillian, but it can be too much to take in at one time. There's only a limit to how much I can take in.

Jillian Forde ([16:56](#)):

Yeah, that's a really good call out about the links and especially there's also the workshops that the teams have created for re:Invent, a lot of those are just publicly available, so you can go in and look through those, do them on your own at your own pace.

Simon Elisha ([17:13](#)):

Definitely. Definitely. The other thing I highly recommend, whether you are there or not there, is sharing interesting sessions with folks. So often people will call out while they're there, "Hey, I went to this session. If there's a repeat, you should definitely go. Do that on social media." Great thing to do, really helpful to folks, but another great thing that I see a lot of people do is, "Oh, I just saw this session and Jane back at the office would be super interested," and you just send them the link or the information to the session and they can check it out later on as well. So it's kind of a communication mechanism too.

Jillian Forde ([17:41](#)):

That's a good call.

Simon Elisha ([17:42](#)):

So any other tips, Jillian, that you'd like to share based on your experiences and what you've seen it re:Invents past?

Jillian Forde ([17:49](#)):

Yeah, so if you go to a session and you've got questions about your own use case, go up to the person who is doing the talk or maybe it's a product manager or a solutions architect and ask them questions about their use case. They actually are there because they want to help you. So it's totally fine after pull them aside at the end of the session and just ask them a couple of questions.

Simon Elisha ([18:13](#)):

That's a great tip because the other thing that you may not realize is you Jillian, because because you know, because you've done this, but others, is that just how much effort and how high the bar is to present at re:Invent. Everyone at AWS wants to present at re:Invent as a solution architect, but it is a super stringent process. There's a lot of rehearsal. There is a huge amount of work that goes into the content because a lot of the content is net new content and it's a lot of work. Now what that means is when I'm saying, "Oh, poor SAs, they do so much hard work." What I'm saying is they would love to talk about it with you as long as you want because they're invested.

Jillian Forde ([18:49](#)):

Yes. Absolutely. Simon, what about you?

Simon Elisha ([18:52](#)):

For me, the pacing is very important just because there's so much to cover, but talking to people is I think really important and a great opportunity to just connect with people, even if it's briefly just to establish that rapport with folks that you wouldn't normally come across and I'm going to call it out as particularly important for folks who don't live in the US and who aren't in the Valley or Seattle or the usual hubs. It's the highest density of super interesting technology people you're going to come across for your whole year probably if you're traveling into it.

Jillian Forde ([19:23](#)):

So true.

Simon Elisha ([19:24](#)):

So just take advantage of it and say good day to people. In fact, you can use my term, you can say, "Good day." People will go, "What?" The other challenge is if you're a coffee person, you're going to be waiting in a lot of lines for coffee.

Jillian Forde ([19:36](#)):

Oh, that's a good one's. That's so true.

Simon Elisha ([19:38](#)):

Alternative strategies are good. I used to go for a wander because I mean, goodness me, there's a lot of coffee shops in Vegas and being a Melburnian, I'm going to decry all coffee that's not in Melbourne. So let's just put that to one side, but if you have to have some sort of caffeine fix, I would actually walk further down the strip to one of the other Starbucks and get it there rather than the ILLI or some of the others that are in the conference spaces because you'll be waiting a long time.

Jillian Forde ([20:01](#)):

That is true, yes.

Simon Elisha ([20:04](#)):

That's fun. So Jillian-

Jillian Forde ([20:04](#)):

And Plan. Oh, one more. I just remembered. Let's say if you miss the bus and you're going to Uber it or if you decide not to take the bus, I would also plan the Ubers and Lyfts ahead of time because there's a lot of people at re:Invent who are also taking Ubers and Lyfts around.

Simon Elisha ([20:19](#)):

If you could share an Uber, how's that? You could-

Jillian Forde ([20:22](#)):

You just make a new friend, yes.

Simon Elisha ([20:23](#)):

Exactly. Make a new friend. Now, so there are also going to be AWS podcast stickers around the place, so check them out. There'll be various booths around the place, so there's always lots of goodies to pick up as you go. So please feel free to grab an AWS podcast sticker. So Jillian, you and I'll be working hard on creating episodes and content for all the folks during the week, so I think we're both looking forward to it aren't we?

Jillian Forde ([20:46](#)):

Absolutely. I hope to hear what your experience is like. Hit me up on Twitter. Simon, on email.

Simon Elisha ([20:52](#)):

The way we do it.

Jillian Forde ([20:54](#)):

That's right.

Simon Elisha ([20:55](#)):

It's just how we roll, but you're going to have fun. If you get to go, it is an unbelievable experience. I always tell people, whether you like Vegas or not, you've got to go once. It's a thing you've got to see.

Jillian Forde ([20:55](#)):

That's true.

Simon Elisha ([21:05](#)):

You've got to see it to understand it and if you're going have a great time, travel safe, be nice to people and just have an awesome time and until next time, keep on building.