

The Ultimate Guide for Retreat Planners 2026:

Planning A Retreat



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INTRODUCTION

Planning a retreat can often feel overwhelming and daunting, with numerous small decisions and tasks to manage along the way. This guide is designed to equip retreat planners with the essential tools to organize and execute the ideal retreat, all while ensuring the process remains enjoyable and stress-free..

The Ultimate Guide for Retreat Planners is crafted to simplify and organize the various aspects of retreat planning, provide examples and ideas to inspire readers, and ultimately reduce the stress and complexity often associated with planning a retreat from beginning to end. This guide walks readers through every step, from securing support and creating a plan and budget to the final stages of coordinating, promoting, and finalizing last-minute details for a successful retreat..

Chapter 1: Getting Everyone Onboard for the Retreat

If you are planning a retreat there is a good chance that you will have to get your group leadership fully on board with the idea. Before presenting your proposal, make sure that you have researched the details and have formed a game plan, including a preliminary budget. The more complete the plan is the more likely it is to be accepted.

GENERATING SUPPORT

A retreat often creates an ideal setting for a group or team to pursue shared goals, build mutual trust and respect, and grow both as a unit and as individuals. It presents an opportunity to enhance collaboration, deepen relationships, and foster meaningful connections, whether on a personal or spiritual level. Unfortunately, many people overlook the transformative power of a retreat and fail to recognize its direct impact on achieving formal objectives. However, a thoughtfully planned and well-executed retreat can provide countless benefits, greatly improving the dynamics and success of any small team or group.

Ways That a Retreat Can Benefit a Group:

- Provides a refreshing change of scenery and a much-needed break.
- Participants return rejuvenated and motivated.
- Facilitates personal growth and mutual understanding among team members.
- Fosters the development of trust, stronger relationships, and deeper bonds.
- Enhances communication within the group.
- Offers valuable face-to-face interaction in a different setting.
- Breaks the monotony of everyday routines.
- Encourages participants to disconnect from social media and technology.
- Creates space and time for meaningful self-reflection.
- Promotes fun and camaraderie within the group or team.

When pitching a retreat for approval, make sure to have a plan that details specific information about the retreat, but also that enables executives or board members to understand the purpose, benefits and implications of having a retreat.

CREATING A PLAN

There are several factors that you must consider before asking for approval. The easiest way to present your ideas for approval is through a written plan.

ESTABLISHING A BUDGET

When planning a retreat proposal, it is best to request a budget after gathering quotations from nearby retreat venues large enough to easily host your event.

Most venues can provide an *instant quotation* online just by visiting their website. Instant Quotes show you the cost of a group event with guest room pricing, meals and a meeting room. When it comes to activities many facilities have free retreat activities along with maybe some guided activities at an additional cost such as paint night, waterpark, rafting, tubing, canoes or golf course. Having gathered quotations ahead of time makes sure there are no surprises and less opportunity for creating too low of a budget.

Usually organizations will not be able to support your full, or even partial budget. Plan your event well in advance and get members to self fund by putting away a small amount of maybe \$20 per person, per month. Often retreat centers have an online automatic payment plan where they register for their event and a small payment is taken monthly through a credit card. Funding your retreat in this way makes it stress free when it comes to finances. If people want to come they can easily find a way to earn or save an extra \$20 monthly and this means no one is going to have to miss out on an awesome retreat.

Chapter 2: Planning Important Retreat Details

Successful retreat planning requires careful organization. As the event planner, you'll need to make numerous decisions, from selecting the location and activities to planning meals. The first critical step in this process is determining the type of retreat you want to host.

SELECTING A VENUE FOR THE RETREAT

Did you choose an area where your retreat must be and define your participating group? Retreats for a church, scrapbooking group, family gathering, youth groups, men's or women's groups could potentially be completely different depending on the needs of the group.

It is important to know participants will be wanting to make sure their food needs like diet and food allergy can be properly accommodated. Once you understand any special needs within the group you can start shopping for a venue. Decide the specifics of your retreat, based on location, lodging, activities, goals you want to reach, etc. Utilizing a retreat location to its full potential not only is most cost effective but also provides a better retreat experience.

Specifics to Consider:

- Location
- Price
- Amenities
- Activities
- Accessibility/Restrictions Dietary Needs
- Accommodations

Type of Retreat:

- Men's Retreat, Women's Retreat,
- Youth Retreat, School Retreat,
- Family Gathering, Team Building,
- Church Retreat, Company
- Retreat

SELECTING A THEME FOR THE RETREAT

Once you decide on a place it is time to move on to selecting a theme. The most successful retreats have a theme that has activities, discussions, games and other learning experiences. Once a theme is decided, it is easy to pick a retreat title or activities based on that theme.

Men's Retreat Theme Examples:

Pathways to Renewal

This retreat offers men a chance to reset and find renewal amidst the pressures of work and family life. Participants are encouraged to put aside their smartphones and daily obligations, creating space to reflect on life's challenges, appreciate the positive aspects of their journey, and embrace personal growth and learning from their current circumstances.

Story Telling

Men often lack opportunities to be vulnerable and express themselves openly. This retreat invites men to share their life stories, fostering an environment where they can learn from one another and become more comfortable with their own experiences.

Women's Retreat Theme Examples:

A Purses and a Prayer

This theme encourages women to incorporate prayer or mindfulness into their daily routines. By carrying a small memento—such as a keychain, prayer card, or stone—in their purse, they are gently reminded to pause, say a prayer, or take a deep breath whenever they encounter it. This simple practice helps them stay grounded and focused as they navigate their day.

Bloom and Thrive

This retreat theme is designed to help women reconnect with their personal growth and well-being. Often, women are so focused on nurturing others that they forget to nurture themselves. "Bloom and Thrive" encourages participants to embrace self-care and personal development without guilt, recognizing that tending to their own needs is essential for them to

Chapter 2: Planning Important Retreat Details

fully blossom in their roles at home, at work, and in their communities. Through activities such as journaling, nature walks, and creative workshops, women will rediscover their strengths, passions, and the joy of personal growth.

Youth Retreat Theme Example:

Embrace Your True Self

In a world where social media and societal standards dictate how we should look, dress, and measure our worth, teens often struggle with self-esteem and identity. The "Embrace Your True Self" retreat theme is designed to help young people break free from these pressures by celebrating their individuality and what makes them unique. Through group activities, self-reflection exercises, and team-building experiences, participants will learn to appreciate their own strengths and the qualities that make each member of the group special. This retreat encourages teens to find confidence in who they are and to support one another in embracing their true selves.

School Retreat Theme Example:

Perspectives and Pathways

This educational retreat, titled "Perspectives and Pathways," is designed to challenge participants by delving into trending topics and controversial issues. While these discussions may be uncomfortable at times, they offer a valuable opportunity for individuals to share their viewpoints openly and honestly. As participants explore historic ideals, the retreat will also include activities and discussions focused on finding common ground, fostering mutual respect, and building stronger connections despite differences. The goal is to promote understanding and unity within the group, even when opinions diverge..

Family Retreat Theme Example:

Digital Detox

In today's world, where smartphones and technology dominate every aspect of life—from calendars and communication to entertainment—families often find themselves overwhelmed by the constant digital noise. The "Digital Detox" retreat theme is designed to help families reclaim control over their lives by reducing reliance on technology and finding balance. Through discussions on technology-free weekends, the use of devotional apps, and

Chapter 2: Planning Important Retreat Details

strategies for carving out dedicated time for family and faith, this retreat encourages participants to reflect on their digital habits and explore ways to reconnect with each other in more meaningful, tech-free ways. Engaging activities and thoughtful conversations will inspire families to prioritize what truly matters and create a healthier relationship with technology.

Team Retreat Theme Example:

Turning Challenges into Triumphs

Teams inevitably encounter obstacles along their journey. Instead of letting these challenges intimidate, discourage, or hinder progress, this retreat focuses on empowering team members to view obstacles as opportunities for growth and development. Through discussions and activities, participants will learn to approach problems with a solution-oriented mindset, explore multiple pathways to overcome challenges, and embrace the potential for learning and personal growth in every difficult situation. The goal is to transform setbacks into stepping stones for success.

More Theme Ideas:

Verse by Verse: Finding Guidance in Scripture
Harmony of the Heart: A Journey Through Song
Gifts Unwrapped: Discovering Your Spiritual Strengths
Knowing Me, Knowing You: Insights from Personality Tests
Mirror Moments: The Power of Self-Reflection
Bridging the Gap: The Art of Communication
Friends by Faith: Building Stronger Bonds
Esteem Builders: Embracing Your Worth
Crossroads: The Power of Making Choices
Walking Together: Understanding the Life of Your Peers

Catchy Theme Titles:

Unshakeable Foundations
Embracing Every Moment
Cultivating Joy
Reality Reset
WWJD: Walking the Path
Next Steps
Journey of the Spirit
Navigating Stress and Loss
MAD: Making a Difference
From Fear to Freedom

Chapter 3: Coordinating the Retreat

After your event plan is finalized, the next step is to make all necessary reservations. Current technology has made the filling out of paperwork and materials obsolete, and everything has moved online and is very streamlined.

Once reservations are secured and the retreat is confirmed internally, it's time to focus on promoting your retreat. Effective planning and promotion are key to ensuring a strong turnout. Many retreat locations offer an online dashboard and booking link and website pages to assist with planning, booking, and promoting your event, so be sure to take advantage of these tools to maximize your retreat's success.

THE RESERVATION PROCESS

As a retreat planner, you'll need to handle a variety of tasks that go beyond just booking reservations. This includes planning events and activities, making deposits, preparing materials, and managing numerous other small details that often go unnoticed. To help ensure a smooth booking and reservation process, here are a few key considerations. Additionally, be sure to visit your chosen retreat's website for reservation forms and other helpful information.

Retreat Planners Must:

- Schedule and secure event dates
- Understand the terms on your contract
- Make any necessary deposits
- Create a calendar with deadlines for paperwork, planning, and other due dates
- Develop an event schedule or planning worksheet
- Understand insurance and permission form requirements
- Book schedule events
- Arrange for any needed equipment rentals
- Assist participants with their questions
- Facilitate communication between the retreat and participants
- Submit all deposits by the retreat's specific deadlines

PROMOTING THE RETREAT

Promoting your retreat with well-designed and engaging posts is essential for achieving a strong turnout and ensuring the success of your event. When planning your promotional strategy, consider what types of content and methods will resonate most effectively with your specific team or group. Tailoring your promotions to their preferences will help maximize interest and participation. Use Gen AI to help brainstorm ideas.

Printed Materials:

Design brochures in places like Canva and get them printed by VistaPrint or local shop

Social Media Materials:

Social Media & Event Pages
Post in your Group Chat
Email Invites

MANAGING RETREAT SIGN-UP

Retreat Centers have gone a long way in the area of sign-up. Gone are the days of phoning or filling out a form. Venues now give Event Planners a simple web link. Everyone interested in coming to the retreat clicks on that link. Sign-ups go through a number of tiny web page steps that collect their retreat preferences, allergies and deposit. Within 45 seconds to 1 minute the registration is complete along with any deposit. It is fast and painless and the Event Organizer sees the registered person added to their electronic dashboard.

Retreat Specific Material:

Sign-up link will include:

General Information

Location

Meal times

Accommodation information

Sign-Up Options:

Online Sign-Up (Using Web link)

Chapter 4: Preparing for the Retreat

With the planning stages behind you—having secured approval, selected a venue and theme, organized the details, reserved space, booked activities, and sent out a book link to invited guests—you should feel confident and ready to move forward.

The next step is to focus on preparing for the retreat itself. As the retreat planner, your role extends beyond organizing the event; you are also responsible for helping participants get ready so they can fully engage and benefit from the experience.

CHECKING LAST MINUTE DETAILS

As a planner, it's your responsibility to ensure that every aspect of the retreat is meticulously prepared to guarantee a successful event. This involves attending to the specific details, making sure that all necessary tasks are completed on or ahead of schedule.

Final preparations take place just a few days before the retreat. This is the time to gather materials, finalize travel arrangements, check the weather, double-check your online dashboard from your retreat centre that holds all your reservations, ensure all information has been communicated, and get the venue ready for the arrival of your guests and planned activities.

CHECK THE WEATHER

Monitor the weather forecast to ensure that all planned activities, whether indoor or outdoor, can proceed as scheduled. If there's any possibility of inclement weather, be sure to have a backup plan in place.

TRANSPORTATION

If transportation is required, make the necessary arrangements and ensure you have a clear understanding of who will be traveling together. Use sign-in sheets or headcounts to keep groups organized and ensure everyone stays together.

EVENT SPECIFICS

Coordinate the logistics for pick-up and drop-off of all necessary equipment, such as audio/visual gear, entertainment supplies, and machinery. Also, confirm the arrival details for any talent, vendors, or catered food.

PAPERWORK

Ensure all releases, paperwork, and payments were submitted at least two weeks before the event. However, it's crucial to double-check, either online or by phone, that everything has been received and that check-in is ready for participants upon arrival. Additionally, make sure all materials to be distributed to participants, including schedules, maps, and worksheets, are packed and ready to go.

COORDINATING PARTICIPANT PREPARATION

The responsibilities of the retreat planner and the participants are clearly distinct, yet there are some overlapping tasks as the event approaches. For instance, while the retreat planner checks the weather to ensure all events proceed smoothly, participants might also want to check the forecast to help them decide what to pack and to plan their travel time accordingly.

CHECK THE WEATHER

Monitor the weather forecast and share this information with participants. If there are any schedule changes or additional items that need to be packed due to weather conditions, promptly inform all participants.

TRAVEL

If transportation isn't provided, assist in organizing group carpooling. Provide participants with essential travel details, including dates (for taking time off work, if necessary), travel time, directions, packing tips, and parking information. Offer advice on individual preparation, such as packing and vehicle maintenance, to help participants manage factors beyond your control.

PERSONAL

Make necessary arrangements such as finding a babysitter or pet sitter, taking time off work, checking the weather, confirming travel time and traffic, and packing. Ensure you have all required paperwork (e.g., maps, schedules, information), and any outfits or materials needed to align with the retreat's theme.

PAPERWORK & DETAILS

Verify that all required paperwork has been submitted. Bring any essential medical or special documents, as well as printed materials related to the event or retreat, such as maps, activity schedules, menus, contact information, and payment details.

SUMMARY

Congratulations! By reading through this guide, you should now be well-prepared to begin planning—or continue progressing with—the organization of your successful retreat. This eBook covers a lot of ground, so to ensure you didn't miss anything, we've provided a handy checklist. Feel free to print it out and use it as a helpful reference while you plan your retreat!

Planning A Retreat Checklist

- Research Retreat Options**
- Decide Why to Host a Retreat**
- Identify Participants**
- Create a Plan:**
 - What
 - Who
 - When
 - Where
 - Why
 - How
 - Goal
- Establish a Budget**
- Get Approval**
- Fundraise if Necessary**
- Select a Venue**
- Choose a Theme**
- Select a Retreat Title**
- Decide on Retreat Activities**
- Plan Retreat Discussions**

Scheduling and Logistics

13. **Schedule or Complete:**
- Event Dates
 - Rooms/Lodging
 - Pay Deposits
 - Rent Equipment
 - Schedule Food
 - Schedule Entertainment

Paperwork and Communication

14. **Complete/Send Paperwork:**
- Insurance Paperwork
 - Permission Forms
 - Contact Information
 - Organization Information
15. **Invite Participants**

16. **Provide Important Information to Participants**
17. **Submit All Required Paperwork**
18. **Set Up Reservation or Sign-Up Process**

Promotion and Sign-Up

19. **Promote the Retreat:**
- Printed Materials
 - Social Media
 - Online Platforms
20. **Prepare for Retreat Sign-Up**

Final Preparations

21. **Check Last Minute Details:**
- Weather
 - Finalize Transportation
22. **Secure Personal Details:**
- Child/Animal Care
 - Forward Calls/Emails
23. **Ensure All Paperwork is Ready**
24. **Coordinate Participant Preparation**
25. **Coordinate Participant Travel**
26. **Ensure Everyone Arrives and Signs-In**
27. **Collect Final Payments from Participants**
28. **Bring Essentials:**
- I.D.
 - Chargers
 - Clothes
 - Sanitary Items
 - Medications

Feel free to use this checklist to keep your retreat planning on track!

ABOUT US

Wilderness Edge is a year-round retreat and conference centre providing group overnight retreats for over 28 years in Pinawa, MB. With 143 guest bedrooms and suites, hot buffet meals, numerous meeting rooms and a variety of on-site activities, Wilderness Edge is the perfect destination for group retreats of 20-400 persons. They also offer activities that are great for corporate team building, school field trips, family gatherings and reunions. The retreat center is built on 11 acres on the beautiful Winnipeg River and is conveniently located in East Whiteshell only 1 hour from Winnipeg.

To learn more about Wilderness Edge and their retreats, visit:
<https://wildernessedge.com/>

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