



Camp and Retreat Planning Kit

Provided by Lake Retreat Camp

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Booking Your Venue

Finding and reserving a venue are the first steps in retreat planning. Booking 3-12 months before your event date is a good guideline. If you are planning a retreat for June, July or August, 12 months is appropriate.

While investigating camps and retreat centers, think about the tone that you would like to set for your retreat and identify what things are important to you.

Here are some great questions to ask yourself as you look for a venue:

- What are the demographics of my guests/campers?
- What activities would I like to participate in?
- How far away (or nearby) would I like to be?
 - For guests/campers under 12, choose a venue no farther away than an hour and a half or so.
- What is my price range?
 - If you want a more budget-friendly option, choose a retreat center or camp that requires you to bring your own bedding.
- What are other expenses that I should account for?
 - Are you playing games/activities that require special equipment?
 - Are you paying for your volunteers to come?
 - Are you giving an honorarium to a guest speaker?
 - Most venues require a deposit upfront- Is that set aside?
- What time of year do I want to book my retreat?
- What length do I want my retreat to be?

As you call camps and retreat centers, have the following information ready to give:

- 1) Dates or time of year that you are interested in.
- 2) The type of group that you plan to bring (kids, adults, families, etc.).
- 3) Number of guests that you think will attend (give a realistic estimate or even a range, be mindful of the venue's minimums).
- 4) Preferred length of stay (knowing your first and last meal is helpful).

Once you have found a venue that fits your needs, consider scheduling a tour with them. This can help with your planning. If a tour is not an option, gather pictures from their website and take a look at their grounds map.

Quick Tip: For a useful list of Christian camps, conference centers and retreat centers go to CCCA.com and then click on "Discover Camp" near the top and then look for the "Find a Camp" section.

Sample: Weekend Retreat Schedule

Friday: (If you are leaving from another location – communicate clearly when and where to meet)

4 PM- Registration/find rooms/unpack/get settled
 6:30 - Dinner
 7:15 PM: Session #1
 8 PM: Activity (See the games section on page 5-8)
 10 PM: Quiet hour. Free time until lights out

Saturday:

8 AM: Breakfast
 9 AM: Session #2
 10:30 AM: Breakout, activity, or discussion
 12 PM: Lunch
 1 – 4 PM: Free Time (this might include scheduled paintball, field game, swimming, etc....)
 5 PM: Dinner
 6 PM: Session #3
 7:30 PM: Group Activity
 9 PM: Board games
 10 PM: Quiet hour. Free time until lights out

Sunday:

7:30 AM: Start packing
 8 AM: Breakfast
 8:30 AM: Session #4
 9:15 AM: Finish Packing/clean up
 10 AM: Say goodbye and head home

Things to Remember While Making Your Retreat Schedule:

- Check your camp/retreat center's paperwork for important information like meal times, times that activities are offered, and check-in/out times. This is the frame-work for your schedule. As you plan and have more details, go back and fill in around the set times.
- Be sure that you have reserved any activities that you would like with your venue.
- Evaluate the number of helpers/staff that you have and plan accordingly. Choose simpler games and activities that need less prep if you are short on staff.
- Double check your venue's quiet hours.
- Ask your venue! They know their camp or retreat center inside and out, so use them as a resource!

Quick Tip: Give your staff and volunteers nametags on a lanyard. This gives you a great spot to put your schedule and the leader's phone number. Print the staff's name (or simply the word "staff" or "leader") on one side and a schedule on the back side. Now your staff is "in the know", and have easy access to important info the entire retreat!

Promoting, Planning & Communicating

Planning Items:

- Book Venue
- Book Guest Speaker
- Recruit volunteer help (if applicable)
- Create registration/sign up for event/retreat:
 - Set a registration deadline at least 2 weeks prior to event.
 - Include permission slips and waivers
 - Include info on how to send medications/other
 - Include Dietary requests based Venue's Food Service Policy
- Create schedule
 - Use Camp/Retreat Center's meal times
 - Schedule activities with the venue (example: boats, archery tag, etc.)
- Make Room Assignments (if applicable).
 - Decide where guest speaker will be assigned
- Arrange to bring a check for payment upon arrival to retreat center
- Arrange for the honorarium check for your guest speaker

Communication Items:

- Create a flyer, webpage, Facebook event, etc. so guests/campers have easy access to info and sign up.
 - Requiring payment with sign up is the best way to ensure an accurate head count.
 - Don't forget to include a packing list
 - **Send out email or notifications once a month and then once a week as you get close to the event registration deadline.**
- Parent Email (if applicable)
 - Create communication (flyer, email, post, etc.) specifically for parents and include:
 - Name and Address of camp/retreat center
 - Phone number of leader on retreat to call if they need to get a hold of their child
 - Drop off and pick up times AND locations
 - Packing list
 - Registration deadline & Instructions on sign up and payment

4-6 Weeks Before Retreat:

- Repeat the hand outs and posts. Re-read your flyer/email/posts and update any info.
- Check the venue's paperwork again and make sure you have gathered all of your registrations by the required head count dates.

2 Weeks Before Retreat:

- Give the venue your tentative head count and confirm details (activity times, meal times, check-in/out times, etc.)
- Give the retreat center your requests for special dietary needs according to the venue's Food Service Policy.
- Touch base with your guest speaker

1 Week Before Retreat:

- Give venue final head count
- Cut a check for the venue
- Cut a check for your guest speaker
- Send out last flyer/email/social media post to guests/camps and parents with reminders of start and end time of your retreat and any pertinent instructions.

Quick Tip: If your guests/campers are kids, find ways to reach the parents directly. Email is great. If your organization has a bulletin or monthly email, this can also be an effective way to get the necessary details to the parents. Good Communication = Successful Retreat!