

Where's the best place for our retreat? Things to consider as you choose your location By Kay Nysse; Tahquitz Pines Conference Assoc.

Is your group adults, kids, couples, singles, or families; or a mixture of all of the above?

Check out what type of housing is available at the facility you are contracting. Would your group be better suited to sleeping in dorms, individual rooms, or cabins? A biggie question can be, "Do I have to walk outside to find the bathrooms or showers?" or even, "Are there flush toilets?" Is the terrain rugged or can it be walked in high heels? Will the older members of your group enjoy getting around there as much as the not so older ones? Remember, most retreats are not about endurance tests.

Would our group be happiest with a rustic, semi-rustic, comfortable, or a luxuriously pampered setting?

Retreat facilities offer a wide variety of amenities. Ahead of time, be sure to check out whether or not your choice offers an emphasis on rugged outdoorsy type activities, includes its own in-house spa and exercise room, or is somewhere in between. Is a pool important to the enjoyment and relaxation of your bunch? How close is the shopping adventure if that might be an interest for free time? What does the area offer in sights and recreational opportunities? We've had some retreat attendees jump out of their cars upon arriving, tennis gear or golf clubs in hand, only to find that we do not have tennis courts or even a miniature golf course, contrary to what someone's second cousin's wife's brother thought he heard about the retreat five years ago. It's sad to disappoint your group before things even get started. It makes the truly spiritual experiences at a retreat more difficult to come by.

Food!

What is your group's expectation with regards to meals? Unfortunately we are food-oriented creatures, and this item can make or break a retreat experience. Is your bunch generally happy with "home camp cooking" or are they seeking more of a gourmet, cuisine type of fare? Most facilities have sample menus that your leaders can look over beforehand.

Last and certainly NOT least -- Retreat.

The word implies getting away, coming to a place apart from the normal, busy, everyday goings on to seek spiritual refreshment. Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God..." Does the facility that you are considering do that for you, and will it give your people that needed respite so that they will find the peace to listen for God's still, small voice? If you are able to, visit the retreat sites that you are investigating. You'll have a much better idea of whether or not they will suit the needs of your group and a much clearer picture of the directions needed to navigate there. Driving distance can be an important factor in your decision. Everyone will have differing opinions on just how far away is far enough, but again, remember this is not an endurance test! You will want to maximize your time at the facility, not using a large portion of the weekend getting to it.

Above all else, cover your plans and your retreat in prayer. God will accomplish exactly what he desires with your retreat, whether or not everything goes according to your plans.

Psalm 23:3

"He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Come and let Him restore your soul.