



Planning Yoga Retreats

By: Nancy Wile

Yoga Education Institute

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Introduction

Yoga retreats, including international trips, have grown tremendously in popularity over the past 20 years. Yoga magazines, yoga studio bulletin boards, and yoga teacher websites teem with ads for retreats. These days many teachers with a following offer students a chance to deepen their practice in a distraction-free and idyllic setting. Yoga retreats can be transformational for both teacher and student. And many retreat leaders find they gain more from the experience than just a week on a beach and some extra cash in their pockets. In an hour and a half yoga class you can only go so deep. When you practice for hours every day with students on a retreat, you get to know them well, and deep spiritual and physical transformations can occur on the mat. That connection and getting students deeper into their practice is what makes retreats so gratifying.

If you are interested in offering retreats, how do you distinguish yourself, and plan a successful and unforgettable retreat? What are the pitfalls and advantages of hosting a retreat and how do new teachers start out?

The following ideas will help you think about the many aspects of planning a retreat and help you have a great experience.

Getting Started

Just like it is best to be a student first, then a teacher; it is also best to be a retreat guest first, and then a retreat leader. Before you consider leading a retreat, it is best to go on at least one or two as a client. Listen to fellow retreat goers' likes and dislikes. Apply what you learn into how you want to guide a retreat yourself. Also, you may consider assisting on a retreat with a teacher you admire to really see the behind the scenes action.

Starting with Local Retreats and Workshops

Because international retreats require significant financial and time commitments for both teacher and student, many instructors prefer to host local retreats, especially at first. Start by offering local retreats in places that are within driving distances of your home. Once you feel confident in offering retreats in an area you know well, you have an easier time when you begin offering retreats that are much further away. Before you plan your first week long yoga retreat, start with a simple Yoga Day. The first step is to secure a location. You can find a retreat center or resort in your area. Make sure it's a nice space. People don't want to spend money to be in an uncomfortable or unclean space.

Activity

Make a list of meeting spaces, or conference/retreat centers in your area that could be used for a yoga day or a weekend retreat.

Yoga Day Sample Schedule

If you are hosting a yoga day, start the day off with a get-acquainted circle, giving each person a chance to talk about who they are, why they are there and what they want to get out of the event.

Next, lead a yoga class for one to one and half hours and after the class, comes a lecture by someone other than you. Think about somebody you like personally, who is good in a related health field and who would be willing to talk for 30 minutes to an hour on their field. This might include someone who specializes in aroma therapy, mindfulness training, or reiki. Have lunch available. Many places that offer rental space can also cater the lunch.

After the lunch, you can have a demonstration from a health-related professional (i.e. recipes from a nutritionist, or proper posture techniques from a doctor, chiropractor or personal trainer, etc). The demonstration should be something that doesn't require too much activity from the participants, so they can digest their lunch, and should last about 45 minutes to an hour. After the demonstration, lead another yoga session, which is more relaxing and restorative than the first and lasts about one hour.

Yoga days don't have to last the whole day. Scheduling the day from 10:00 to 4:00 should give you enough time. The charge for a day like this is usually between \$80-\$150 per person, depending on the facility, where you live, the food you provide and how elaborate you get with the extras.

Yoga Weekend

Once you've tried a few yoga days, move on to providing a yoga weekend. You'll want to find a nice place where people can also spend the night. Look for hotels or resorts with large garden areas and the amenities you need. Make sure that the location isn't too far from your local students because they will be your most likely clients for the weekend and are much more likely to come if they can drive rather than fly.

A typical daily schedule for a yoga weekend may look like this:

- Hatha Yoga – 7:30-8:45 am
- Breakfast – 9 a.m.
- Workshop (i.e. yoga sutras, eight limbs, creative visualization) – 10-12:30
- Lunch – 1 – 2:00 pm
- Workshop (i.e. reiki circle, nutrition with recipes, aroma therapy) – 2:00-4:00 pm
- Gentle Hatha Yoga – 4:00-5:30 pm
- Dinner – 5:30-7:00 pm
- After Dinner Walk/Hike – 7:00-8:00 pm
- Meditation/Discussion – 8:00-9:00 pm

Costs to consider for workshops and short retreats

The main cost for a yoga day or a yoga weekend is the space. Even if you currently own a yoga studio, you will likely be having your special event at another space, while your regular weekend classes proceed as usual. The cost of a space can vary greatly, depending on the location, the demand for the space, and whether or not you are providing food, and what type of food is included.

Longer Retreats

Once you have had some success with yoga days or yoga weekends, you can begin planning a week long yoga retreat.

Where to Go

When deciding the place you want to go, there are a few more things to consider than just the fabulous locations. Where do you want to go? Make a list of the locations where you would like to travel. Where do your students want to go? Ask your current students where they would like to go and make a list. Do you want to stay in your home country or go to an international location? Popular destinations for retreats outside the continental United States include Costa Rica, Mexico, Hawaii, Thailand, Bali and India. Some teachers combine their personal vacations with scouting sessions for retreat centers, while others do rigorous Internet research or rely on word-of-mouth to choose their destinations. The popularity of yoga vacations has given rise to a crop of hotels that specialize in hosting yoga retreats. These places tend to be a bit pricier but make most of the arrangements for you. Many teachers prefer to do their own planning, going to less expensive locations off the beaten path. For first-time retreat leaders, language barriers, distance, cultural gaps and organizational glitches can make planning extremely challenging. First timers should speak with people who have experience offering retreats in the area where they wish to go, or by going to a preplanned yoga retreat center.

When to Go

Is it on or off-season where you are going? Off-season has lower rates at retreat centers, but the weather may not be ideal. Is the time you are choosing to travel the best time for your students to travel? If you have students with small children, traveling during certain times of the year may be easier than others. How much are plane tickets where you want to go? Make sure you're not booking the trip at a time when people will have to fly during peak travel times. September can be a good time in Europe or in Canada or the northern parts of the United States – the weather is still nice without all the summer crowds and plane tickets and hotels may be more affordable. In tropical locations, such as in Florida or the Caribbean islands, February can be a good time to go. The weather is nice and, depending on where you live, people may be ready to get out of the cold, and it's not during the fall hurricane season.

Activity

Write down three locations for retreats that are further away (domestic or international). Where would you like to go? What is your dream destination?

On Your Own or With Strategic Partners

One lure of retreats is working in a beautiful place. But as enticing as it might sound to teach yoga in Costa Rica for a week, it's no vacation. You have to be on 24/7. Constant responsibility for a group is why some teachers plan retreats with partners. Your partner can simply be another yoga teacher. Find someone who can bring something different, but complementing to what you offer. For example, if you plan to teach vinyasa yoga and other physically challenging practices and activities, then it might be a great balance to partner with someone who can teach the slower restorative and meditative evening practices. While it helps to split the responsibility and work, the profits are also cut in half and there's the risk of conflict. You must know your partner well. However, it's also easier to fill a retreat by pulling students from two e-mail lists, and it can feel less intimidating knowing that someone else is in this with you.

For your first trip, it's often helpful to use a retreat center that is set up for yoga retreats. Ask your friends where they have gone and ask other leaders for recommendations. Not all retreat centers are made alike but most are fabulous. They will help you plan the trip, organize transport to and from the airport, feed you well, and schedule day trips once you are there. If you want to veer away from the retreat locations, they will often also plan that.

Some teachers plan the entire retreat themselves, while others work with retreat planning companies, such as Via Yoga or Pravassa. If you work with a company, it will take away from your profits, but will also take away some of the headaches.

Outfits like Via Yoga deal with the potential problems, so that teachers don't have to worry about an unhappy participant whose roommate snores or whose cabin roof leaks. They're a buffer, so you can just deal with the classes and workshops you're giving. The downside to organizing your own retreat is that you have to deal with complaints and other problems. Working with an outside producer is a lot less work—almost like a paid vacation. They will also help market the retreat and get the word out. When you work with a partner retreat company, you just show up, there is someone else taking care of the fact that the shower doesn't work or the food isn't ready on time. On the downside, there is less possible profit when working with a retreat planning company.

A point to consider when deciding whether or not to produce your own retreat is the financial reward versus risk. You can make more money producing your own retreats, but if not enough students sign up, you take all the risk. When you use outside producers, they shoulder the financial risks: If not enough students sign up, they lose the money, not you.

On the flip side of that, if the retreat sells out, the financial gain for you isn't as great, but you can still make around \$1,500, in addition to getting free lodging and covered expenses.

To learn more about retreat planning companies, visit:

www.pravassa.com

www.viayoga.com

Type of Retreat: Pure Retreats vs. Yoga Vacation

In general, there are two different types of retreats: 1) pure retreats, and 2) yoga vacations. When you offer a pure retreat, everyone is there for the yoga. And the fact that you are in a fabulous location is just a bonus. The classes are more frequent and more intense in theme. If you are offering a yoga vacation, your students are there for the location and the fact that they get to do a little yoga is a bonus. The yoga classes are light and fun and don't even always happen, if other activities come along and no one wants to practice. Differentiate between yoga vacations and pure yoga retreats and emphasize which type of retreat this will be. Then, on the very first night that, beyond those labels, emphasize that the retreat is intended for whatever each person needs. That way the expectation of the group is for each person to do what he or she needs to do and not worry so much about what other people may be doing.

Yoga Vacations

Yoga vacations are usually favored by people who want to go deeper into their practice, but are just as interested in being tourists, and enjoying all the perks, beauty and relaxation of a vacation. People can vacation alone yet plug into an instant, like-minded community. Yoga vacations tend to put more emphasis on luxury accommodations (especially international trips) and cater to more affluent students. To set yourself apart, you can offer value-added features for the retreat, such as ayurveda, massage, reiki, restorative yoga, or meditation.

Picking a Retreat Center

- Know the retreat center and do your homework. The retreat center represents you in the eyes of the attendee, so do your homework to make sure that the retreat center will contribute towards that once-in-a-lifetime experience. This will also help you more accurately and enthusiastically market the retreat as well. In addition,
- Ask for referrals from friends and students.
- Only teach “sight-unseen” if a trusted friend has been there or the retreat center has a solid reputation and is well known.
- Use Trip Advisor and get references from people who’ve been there to make sure that the retreat center is highly rated.
- Visit the retreat center yourself if at all possible.
- Take ample pictures and ask questions about the facilities and what they offer
- Interact with retreat center staff—from management to front desk employees to café staff—to ensure that they provide excellent customer service.
- Get a feel for the retreat center and make sure it matches the vibe you wish to create.
- Determine the size of the meeting space available (remember you want to have about 25-30 square feet per person depending on the shape of the room)
- If the retreat center offers excursions and services (i.e. day trips, spa services, etc.) give them a try yourself before suggesting to students.
- If you are planning on using an outfitter for a significant daily part of your retreat activities (i.e. Yoga & surfing, yoga & hiking, etc.), make sure to thoroughly research the outfitter, check their ratings, and use their services yourself.
- Negotiate. There may be a standard listed price, but if you are going in the off-season, you can often negotiate this price much lower.

Activity:

Using your list of possible retreat spaces, begin comparing the spaces by completing the following chart:

Name/location of retreat center	Size of meeting space available	Total cost (meeting space, rooms, meals, etc)	Other activities offered through the retreat center	Overall feel or mission of the space – Is it in line with you

* Note – Some retreat centers charge a per person rate which includes rooms, meeting space and meals, while others charge for each piece separately.

Pricing

Pricing retreats can be tricky. You need to cover the cost of your trip, lost teaching time, the tuition for yoga and the time it takes to organize. Decide if you will be charging students for an all inclusive retreat (airfare, accommodations, yoga, excursions) or if you will just be charging for the actual retreat portion while they will need to make their own travel plans. Having students make their own travel plans to the retreat destination is much easier, especially when you have people coming from different areas. The toughest thing in this financial equation is laying down a deposit without knowing if the retreat will fill. This situation can't be avoided because most retreats need to be booked six months to a year in advance. But if the retreat fills and is budgeted right, it can be far more lucrative than teaching your regular yoga classes.

Size of Retreat

Most retreats are usually capped at about 20 people. This way it keeps the experience more intimate and allows you the opportunity to give each person the individual experience that they wish to have.

Establishing Theme(s) for the Retreat

Doing yoga with the same class day after day can get a bit stale. You can use an overall theme for the entire retreat that you build on each day or multiple themes in which the theme changes each day. Having a theme or themes keeps it interesting for you and your students and creates a focus for the retreat.

Here are a few ideas:

- Investigating the yamas and niyamas. These ideas lend themselves beautifully to Dharma talks, as well.
- Going through the body by focusing on different parts of the body during each class. For example, one class may focus on the hips and hip openers. The next may focus on the spine and improving spinal movement in all four directions (flexion, extension, lateral flexion, rotation). The next may focus on shoulders and chest openers, and so on...
- Focusing on different styles of yoga each day (i.e. yin, vinyasa, ashtanga, etc)
- Add life topics to class (such as surrender, letting go, personal strength, creative visualizations, abundance, or setting intentions) that can be discussed further at the end of class.
- Focusing on healthy living, detox, healthy eating, etc.

Be sure you are clear in your marketing regarding what your classes will be like, how often they will occur, etc.

Activity:

Write down some possible specific themes for your yoga retreat:

Daily Schedule

Schedule each day of your retreat, so people know what to expect. Sometimes you may realize as you get into the retreat that you are doing either too little or too much yoga based on the situation and that you may need to change the plan mid-retreat with everyone's permission. However, it's still important to start with a clear plan, so everyone has a good sense of what they are signing up for.

For week long retreats, a good rule of thumb is to meet as a group at least two times per day and no more than four. It really does depend on your intentions for the retreat. If the trip is a yoga vacation, you will have less hours of actual yoga together, than if it's a pure retreat. Typically, you'll have practice before breakfast and another asana practice just before dinner. If you are doing more practices together, you may want to include a pranayama/meditation practice before lunch or a restorative evening practice.

Some things to keep in mind:

- If day activities (eco-tours, etc) take a long time, be sure there are days when there is enough time between classes to do them.
- You may want to plan one afternoon/evening off for yourself. Keep in mind that while you are in a fabulous location, you are not on vacation. You might realize once you're there that you need a break one evening.
- Late evening discussions: while sounding wonderful in the planning stages, are hard to do. Everyone is usually quite exhausted by then.

Remember that clients have paid some serious money to learn, transform, relax, try new things, see new places, make new friends and enrich their lives. Creating a solid curriculum and schedule for the length of your retreat is important. Each module, each class, should build upon the last with coordinated exercises beyond the asana practice to support your clients' growth and self-work. As the retreat leader, maintaining awareness of the whole picture, and managing all the unexpected things that will arise will leave you with less down time than your schedule may suggest.

Leading a yoga retreat is not just about teaching yoga. Clients rely on you as their contact point for everything: towels, dietary changes, where to buy something, Wi-Fi, transportation, translation, cultural education, etc. You should be familiar with detailed logistics of your area to be able to anticipate client needs. Most important is managing your clients' safety beyond the yoga room, getting waivers signed and keeping an eye out for everyone.

You won't be able to attend yoga classes yourself while hosting a retreat. Therefore, you will also benefit by scheduling some time for your own personal practice. Self-practice may be the only yoga you will get while guiding a retreat. This, along with a strong self-care program is very helpful in keeping your energy up and feeling good about the retreat. You'll

find it necessary to cultivate strong boundaries to maintain the energy needed to share with your students. Too often retreat leaders try to do too much resulting in illness or depletion. Take care of you. Make time for meditation, aloneness, journaling and quiet.

Marketing

Once you've decided on a location, dates, themes and schedule, you will need to get the word out about the retreat. Marketing for retreats is often based on word-of-mouth and the size of a teacher's email list and following. Printing up postcards and posters may work well for a shorter retreat that isn't too far away, but it is often a waste for long international retreats. Few students will take a chance on a teacher they don't know with an expensive international retreat. A teacher's e-mail list is their best resource. For every 100 people on a list, an average of one will sign up for an international retreat and maybe five will go on a local retreat.

Filling retreats takes momentum. Sometimes a first retreat may only get a few people and just barely break even. But if people enjoy the retreat, they will tell their friends and you will have more interest next time. It usually takes about 4-5 participants to break even (possibly less if you have a good deal). It's worth leading a small retreat to create buzz for future trips. Before attempting international retreats, try local retreats; not only for the experience, but also as part of your marketing plan. When your local retreats begin to fill, then you may feel ready for longer retreats that are further away, or international retreats.

Make sure your marketing materials include all the relevant information (dates, place, website for more information, phone number, email link, overall theme, etc) and a call to action, such as "register now."

Regardless of whether you're putting together a yoga class or a yoga retreat, once your promotional graphics and fliers are created, it's time to roll up the sleeves and get to work. It is a hustle trying to get the word out about your event and since it costs money and time, it's important to consider the most appropriate space to reach the type of people who might want to come to your event, whether it's online space or actual space for posting a post card.

You can advertise in the studios where you teach (or in the studio that you own) by making posters and handing out flyers. You can e-mail invitations to those in your student database. You can also broaden your invitations to people you don't know, via online newsletters, or magazines, or through social media. You can also use Google Adwords and other search engine optimization techniques to improve your ranking when people are doing internet searches for yoga retreats. By picking the right words, you can take advantage of targeted marketing. Make sure you have a webpage that gives the details of the retreat and a link for online registration.

Once you've done one retreat, word of mouth and referrals become invaluable, and you may have a few repeat clients. Those customers who are coming for a second or third retreat often want to experience new locations, so try to mix up your retreat destinations.

Activity

Think of a catchy headline for your online information or postcards for your retreat.

Where will you advertise? List online sites, email marketing plan, social media, and yoga studios or complementary businesses where you could post information.

Customer Service

Once people start to hear about your upcoming retreat, the customer service work will begin. Clients and potential clients will have questions that you will need to address. There will be pre-retreat questions as well as issues that arise for your guests during the retreat. Some customer services issues that may arise include: special dietary concerns, payment plan options, packing and laundry questions, questions about your experience and background, and much more. You will also need to collect payments and information from clients and keep that information organized.

Depending on the length and distance of the retreat, you may spend quite a few hours with each person before the trip, on the phone or via e-mail. If you have 20 people joining you and you spend about 3 hours communicating with each person before the retreat, that's 60 hours of customer service work.

On the first night of the retreat, welcome each student individually and give everyone a chance to air any grievances. Allowing people to vent early can nip problems in the bud. Finally, make your students feel special. You can give all participants a gift bag containing personal care products, magazine articles, candles, and other goodies, right at the beginning of the retreat. Always make good customer service a top priority.

Contracts and Forms

Even though the focus of the retreat is yoga, sometimes things go awry, and peace and calm fly out the window. Clarifying financial and other responsibilities in the form of a contract can help smooth things out in the case of conflicts. As the retreat leader, you front the money necessary to reserve the location, and if someone books the tour, you can't sell her space to someone else. If the student cancels, she should be responsible for a portion of your lost income. Entering into a contract when each student registers makes such stipulations clear.

The contract can list cancellation and refund policies. It can remind students to be responsible for getting health insurance if their home policy doesn't cover them. It can include a waiver that reminds students that their safety is their own responsibility. The contract should spell out what the fee does and does not include: which meals are covered, whether any airfare or ground transportation is included, and so on. Ask for emergency information on the contract, and take along copies so that you and always have that information handy. The contract can also encourage your students to buy their own travel insurance, in case they have to cancel.

Finally, remember to protect yourself as well. Check your insurance policy. Does it cover you anywhere you go? Or does it only cover classes in your studio? Does the location you've chosen have its own insurance, or does it require you to carry some?

These are just some of the details that go into planning and managing a retreat. At the root of all these considerations is another big question: Do you want to take care of all these details, or would you rather hire someone else to do that, so you can simply show up to teach?

See the end of this manual for sample reservation, client contract, and liability waiver forms.

Review of Pre-Retreat Tasks

Retreat planning and preparation is extremely time-consuming. It requires excellent organizational skills, marketing experience and a desire to manage the details for sometimes no profit. By deciding to do a retreat, you are accepting another full-time job. You are essentially serving as Project Manager and your own staff simultaneously.

Be prepared for more work than you think you will need to do to prepare for the retreat. Here is a review of some of the pre-retreat tasks you will need to complete:

- Determine a location
- Find the retreat center
- Determine pricing
- Decide on the limit for the size of the group
- Schedule the retreat
- Decide on any themes for the retreat
- Figure out the schedule of yoga and activities
- Prepare classes for the retreat. Prepare classes you are confident in teaching (this is not the week to experiment with something you've never tried before).
- Plan the food
- Make sure that everyone working at the venue is on the same page in terms of scheduling and logistics
- Create marketing material: webpage, flyers, postcards, social media, etc.
- Distribute marketing materials (postcards) and post online marketing materials to social media and on your website
- Create registration materials, and online registration forms
- Register students and answer and questions
- Collect and organize flight information, special dietary needs, emergency contacts any other pertinent information
- Be familiar with what there is to do in the area, have vendors that you trust, have recommendations for restaurants to try, the best beaches, etc.
- Answer any questions from participants and those interested in going
- Organize information on your students just in case of emergency (emergency contacts, phone numbers, any allergies or injuries you should know about, all their travel information, etc)

Spending Money to Make Money

Often, you'll need to spend money to make money.

What costs? Pretty much everything. And it isn't easy to plunk down that initial investment money, because it's a gamble. You don't know how many students (if any) you'll be able to attract, and there's that self doubt that it may not work out.

It's scary, but if you believe in yourself and you're listening to feedback from students, and you're constantly trying to learn and be a better student and teacher, then you can do whatever you put your mind to.

At the Retreat

Once you get to the retreat:

- Check in with the coordinator of the retreat center and with the staff to make sure everything is set and everyone is on the same page.
- Go through the venue, especially the guest rooms, before the students arrive to ensure cleanliness and that they have everything they may need (towels, laundry bag, gift bag if applicable, etc)
- Check to be sure everything in the studio space is functioning before classes start (speakers, lights, props, the locks on the doors, etc)
- Check in with outside vendors who are providing any additional excursions to confirm your activities with them.

Have a “Plan B”

With weather you never know what might happen with your plans. If you’re planning an outdoor practice or a water activity, the weather may not always cooperate. Have some indoor back up activities ready if necessary.

However you choose to roll with it, the most important thing is to model flexibility and openness for your attendees. If you invite, embrace, and celebrate new circumstances and the creative solutions that result, then so will your students.

In your marketing materials, emails, and verbal communications leading up to the retreat, provide disclaimers that, although there is an intended schedule, all activities and time frames are subject to change. Reiterate this once you are at your retreat, as well. Then when “Plan B” needs to be executed, your students will be at ease with the changes, having expected them already.

For example you may have set a daily schedule that the students expect to follow and by the third day you realize the group misses beach time at sunset every night because they are in yoga class. You want to have the freedom to switch things up to allow them to experience beach time at a different time of day. You want to have the flexibility to change the schedule for the benefit of your participants.

Managing your Attendees’ Expectations

Even if you’ve modeled resourcefulness and flexibility for your students, it can be hard for students to accept that things aren’t going the way they expect.

Many retreat attendees will have been dreaming of the retreat for months, and will have made a significant investment of time and money to make those dreams come true.

That’s why it’s crucial to manage your students’ expectations both before and during the retreat.

Little Things Matter

A little thought can go a long way.

If a retreat participant has traveled to the retreat center with an injury, an ice pack and hand written note waiting for them when they arrive can make all the difference to how they feel (and what their attitude is like) the next morning.

Did one of your students have to deal with flight cancellations or airline delays and arrive after hours? A kind welcome note and a bottle of water at the front desk can be the light at the end of the tunnel. Has one of your students fallen ill with a sore throat? Ordering a soothing drink to be sent to their room can make all the difference to how they feel about being under the weather.

It's also a good idea to have a first aid kit with you if you take the group hiking or on some other activity away from the retreat center. And, make note if it's someone's birthday or other special occasion, and how you can help them celebrate. Small acts of kindness can be profound, and can have a significant effect on the tone of a retreat.

Delegate, delegate, delegate!

Leading a retreat is not a vacation. You are 'on' 24-7, teaching, socializing, and supporting your students. Leading a retreat is like being the main host at a party for 7 days straight. There is quite a bit of administrative and coordinating work to be done on a retreat in between yoga classes: resolving rooming issues, communicating scheduling and logistics information to your students, ensuring your financials are in order with the retreat center, gathering health information from your students, and keeping the retreat running on track. When it comes to yoga sessions, you'll want to provide hands-on assists, get to the practice space early to open it and stay late to ensure that it is tidied, and get props for students who need them during class. With so much to do, delegation and putting systems in place is critical.

Call upon retreat center staff and co-teachers to help where they can. Consider bringing along a yoga class assistant and/or an administrative assistant so you can focus on being there for your students and teaching A+ classes.

Keeping the Group Happy

After all the planning, keeping the group happy can be as simple as giving them plenty of free time and feeding them well. Food is a key factor in leaving students with a good impression. Most things can be overlooked, except for food. Make sure to listen to your guests and do your best to solve problems while they are still small.

Problems Will Arise

No matter how much you prepare and plan, problems pop up beyond your control. The electricity might go out, or someone might get sick. You might get sick. Whatever it is, as the leader, you've just got to deal with it, in a professional way, and find a solution as quickly as possible.

Yoga retreats can be intense and often really transformational for people. As the leader of the group, people will often open up to you. Students often implode once they are able to get away from the chaos of their everyday life. They may not be used to having quiet and what they discover in their minds can be disconcerting. If someone in your group is having a bit of a meltdown, remember to be patient and loving. Sometimes the frustration of a meltdown may get directed towards you because the student does not fully understand what the issue is. They feel uncomfortable at the retreat, and since you planned the retreat, you must be the cause of the discomfort. You need to be ready to remain calm and supportive in these types of situations. You need to be able to walk your students through whatever they are working on, and to listen without judgment and to not take things personally.

The Memories will be unforgettable

All the hard work pays off. The real joy here is the people you meet. I believe that everyone I meet knows something I don't, and so spending time with the people who come to a retreat is an opportunity to connect and learn and grow and make memories.

US Based Retreat Centers (A List to Get you Started)

Ananda Center at Laurelwood
Gaston, Oregon
<http://anandalaurelwood.org/>

Art of Living Retreat Center
Boone, North Carolina
<https://artoflivingretreatcenter.org/>

Bend of Ivy Lodge
Asheville, North Carolina
<http://bendofivylodge.com/>

Buckhorn Springs Retreat Center
Ashland, OR
<http://buckhornsprings.org/retreats/>

Cai Wood Education Center
Jamestown, CO
<http://www.calwood.org/retreats>

Cedarbrake Renewal Center
Belton, TX
<http://www.austindiocese.org/cedarbrake>

Chipinaw
Swan Lake, NY
<http://www.chipinaw.com/>

Claymont Society Retreats
Charles Town, WV
<http://claymont.org/>

Crazy's Wasewagan Camp and Retreat
Angelus Oaks, CA
<http://www.wasewagan.com/>

Crestone Mountain Zen Center
Crestone, CO
<http://crestoneretreats.org/>

Dancing Deer Farm
Templeton, CA

EarthRise Retreat Center
Petaluma, CA
<http://noetic.org/earthrise>

Eastover Estate and Retreat
Lenox, MA
<http://www.eastover.com/>

Edwards House Meeting and Retreat Center
Framingham, MA
<http://www.edwardshouseframingham.org/>

Franciscan Renewal Center
Scottsdale, AZ
<http://thecasa.org/meetings/>

Friendly Crossways Retreat Center
Harvard, MA
<http://friendlycrossways.com/>

Guest House Retreat and Conference Center
Chester, CT
<http://www.guesthousecenter.org/>

Halemalu
Kona, HI
<http://www.halemalu.com/>

Harbin Hot Springs
West Middletown, CA
<http://www.harbin.org/workshops/information-for-workshop-leaders/>

Hawaii Island Retreat
Kapaau, HI
<http://www.hawaiiislandretreat.com/>

Historic COD Ranch and Retreat
Oracle, AZ
<http://www.codranch.com/group-retreats/yoga-groups/>

Joshua Tree Retreat Center
Joshua Tree, CA
<http://www.jtrcc.org/>

Jesuit Retreat Center
Applegate, CA
<http://uccr.org/camp/jesuit-retreat-center>

Kashi Ashram
Sebastian, FL
<http://www.kashi.org/>

La Casa De Maria Retreat Center
Santa Barbara, CA
<https://www.lacasademaria.org/retreats-conferences-overview/>

Lake Doniphan Conference and Retreat Center
Excelsior Springs, MO
<http://www.lakedoniphan.com/>

Manzano Mountain Retreat
Torreon, NM
<http://manzanoretreat.com/>

Maui Healing Retreat
Makawao, HI
<http://www.mauihealingretreat.com/>

Mercy Center – Hosting Conferences in the SF Bay Area
Burlingame, CA
<http://www.mercy-center.org/>

Mount Madonna Center
Watsonville, CA
<http://www.mountmadonna.org/programs/rental.html>

Namaste
Boerne, TX

Naturebridge in Golden Gate National Recreation Area
Sausalito, CA
<http://www.naturebridge.org/golden-gate/conference-facilities>

NatureBridge in Olympic National Park
Port Angeles, WA
<http://www.naturebridge.org/olympic/conference-facilities>

Newfound Lake Retreat Centers
Hebron, NH
<http://www.coppertoppe.com/guests/retreats.htm>

Orange Springs Retreat
Orange Springs, FL
<http://www.orangespringsretreat.com/>

Pali Mountain Retreat and Conference Center
Running Springs, CA
<http://www.paliretreat.com/pali-retreat-meeting-spaces.html>

Peaceful Meadow Retreat
Boulder, CO
<http://www.peacefulmeadow.com/>

Ronora Lodge and Retreat Center
Watervilet, MI

San Damiano Retreat
Danville, CA
<http://sandamiano.org/>

Sedona Mago Retreat
Sedona, AZ
<http://www.sedonamagoretreat.org/group-retreats/>

Shalom Spirituality Center
Dubuque, IA
<http://shalomretreats.org/reserve.html>

Sevenoaks Retreat Center
Madison, VA
<http://sevenoaksretreat.org/rentals/retreats/>

Synergia Ranch
Santa Fe, NM
<http://synergioranch.com/>

Trout Lake Abbey
Trout Lake, WA
<http://tlabbey.com/index.htm>

Yokoji Zen Mountain Center
Mountain Center, CA
<http://zmc.org/rent>

International Retreat Centers

Amatierra Retreat

Costa Rica

<http://www.amatierra.com/>

Anamaya Yoga Retreat

Costa Rica

Blue Spirit Yoga and Healing

Costa Rica

Harmony Hotel

Costa Rica

Prana Del Mar

Mexico

<http://pranadelmar.com/>

Haramara Retreat

Mexico

<http://haramararetreat.com/>

Swan Yoga Center

India

<http://www.swan-yoga-go.com/yoga-retreat-for-rent-in-go.php>

Samata Holistic Retreat Center

India

<http://samatagoa.com/retreats>

Sample Liability Waiver Form

Dear participant,

This retreat has been created for you to connect with yourself through movement, breath, and activities for personal growth and adventure. Our primary goal is to provide you with an opportunity to go deep into your experience, to explore and enjoy. It is our goal to offer these activities as freely as possible and with the greatest possible access to them. However, these retreats involve risks and uncertainties during our week. For example, we may face extreme weather, possible injury, and emotional challenges could surface. Thus, we ask that you read and sign this waiver of liability. By signing it, you will be indicating that you understand the risks and take responsibility for your physical and emotional well-being. We hope that if anything that should come up for you during your stay that you are able to reach out for help if you need something. We have found from past retreats that most accidents and other challenges can be avoided if you stay grounded in your body and seek assistance before something becomes a problem.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK

I acknowledge that I have voluntarily applied to participate in the _____ Retreat to be held at _____ Resort in (location) on (date), referred to below as "this event". In consideration of (retreat leader) accepting my application for participation in this event, I agree to this release of claims, waiver of liability and assumption of risks. On behalf of myself, my heirs, executors, successors, administrators and any other person who may have an interest at common law or by operation of statute, I hereby waive any and all claims I or such parties may have now or in the future. I release from liability (retreat leader), associates, employees, guides, agents or representatives, "the releasees" for any personal injury, death, property damage or loss or any nature suffered by me as a result of participation in any activity on the retreat. I release from liability (retreat leader) for any cause whatsoever including those arising out of, or in any way connected to or occasioned by the negligence of the releasees.

1. The terrain, natural areas and the ocean are subject to natural forces which result in obstacles and hazards. In some instances activities that contain water can be cold and/or turbulent and extended immersion can be life threatening.
2. Isolation: This retreat is in a third world country. We may be in wilderness and natural areas which may not be regularly patrolled, communication may be difficult and rescue and medical treatment may not be available for hours or even days.
3. Animals: Hiking, swimming and sea kayaking in natural areas may result in encounters with wild animals and insects which may injure or kill.
4. Weather: Weather may change rapidly and may be extreme, presenting significant challenges.

_____ (initial)

I acknowledge the enjoyment and challenge I receive from the activities of this retreat and the wilderness and natural outdoor experience, its isolation and the opportunity to experience wildlife and nature in a natural surrounding and state, and emotional experiences resulting from personal growth exploration, this is my reason for participating in this event, and I voluntarily assume all risks associated with these activities and freely waive any and all legal rights that I may have against the releasees.

_____ (initial)

RELEASE As consideration for being permitted by (retreat leader) to participate in these activities, I hereby agree that I, my assignees, heirs, distributees, guardians, and legal representatives will not make a claim against, sue or attach the property of (retreat leader), their affiliates, employees, agents or volunteers or any of their affiliated organizations for injury or damage resulting from acts, howsoever caused, by any employee, agent, or contractor, or any of their affiliated organizations, as a result of my participation in this event. I hereby release (retreat leader), and any of their agents or affiliated organizations from all actions, claims or demands that I, my assigns, heirs, distributees, guardians, and legal representatives now have or may hereafter have for injury, damage, or death resulting from my participation in this event.

_____ (initial)

I am medically, physically, emotionally and in all respects fit and able to participate in this event. I have no medical requirement or condition except what is outlined in the Registration/Medical form. I agree I will be fully and financially responsible for my own physical condition and well being during the retreat and will follow the safety precautions and instructions prescribed by (retreat center, retreat leader, and excursion operators). I acknowledge that (retreat leader) may make suggestions from time to time that are intended to help me and my well being. However I take ultimate responsibility for my choices and realize that he is not licensed medical provider and that I must consult my doctor. If I experience pain or discomfort during the retreat, I will modify (retreat leader's) instruction to suit my individual needs. I will not hold (group) responsible for any pain or discomfort I experience during or after the retreat. I understand that the activities offered on this retreat are not a substitute for medical care. I understand that (group) is not qualified to perform spinal or skeletal adjustments, diagnose, prescribe, or treat physical or mental illness. I have read carefully and understand this agreement (retreat leader, retreat center and/or its affiliated organizations), and sign it of my own free will.

Signed _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Return waiver with Registration Form to:

Yoga Retreat Reservation Form

Retreat Name: _____

Retreat Dates: _____

Please read carefully the Yoga Retreat Agreement (the "Agreement") within this reservation form. By completing and submitting this form, you agree to be bound by the Agreement between Bendy Yogini, LLC ("Company") and you.

Reservation Form

Please complete one reservation form per person and send by mail, e-mail (scanned as attachment) or fax to _____. You may also drop off the form at our studio. A deposit of \$_____ is due at the time your reservation is made. This deposit is non-refundable. Full payment is due no less than ____ days prior to the first day of the retreat. Payment can be made with a credit card on our website or by completing your credit card information below.

Personal Data

First name _____

Last name _____

Birth date _____ male / female (circle)

Mailing address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Zip/postal code _____

Contact telephone number _____

E-mail address _____

Passport number _____ Passport country _____

Expiration (mm/yy) _____

Deposit payment amount: \$ _____

Full amount of the retreat: \$ _____

Full payment for retreat

_____ I will make payment of the full amount of the retreat online by my credit card.

_____ Please charge my credit card the full amount of the retreat per the following information:

Name on card: _____

Card type (Visa, Mastercard, American Express): _____

Card number: _____

Expiration date: _____ Security code: _____

Travel Information:

If you are traveling with someone else please list their name(s):

Will you be sharing a room or do you prefer single accommodations?

Contact person in case of emergency _____

Their relation to you _____

Telephone number _____

City / State or Province _____

Please provide this information if you would like assistance with arranging your airport transfers:

Arrival date _____

Airline / flight # _____ Time _____

Departure date _____

Airline / flight # _____ Time _____

Health Information Do you have any health conditions (asthma, heart conditions, etc.) or are you taking medications that we should know about?

Do you have any physical limitations or injuries that we should be aware of for the retreat's activities (back conditions, knee/shoulder problems, recent surgery, etc)?

YOGA RETREAT AGREEMENT FORM

Section 1. Reservation.

To reserve your place on the retreat, please complete the reservation booking form and submit it together with the non-refundable deposit for the retreat. This agreement is made between _____ (participant) and _____ (retreat leader).

Section 2. Payment. Payments must be made by credit card. Final balances are due at least _____ days before the beginning date of the retreat. For reservations made within _____ days of the departure date, full payment is required when the reservation is accepted. If payment of the balance of the retreat price is not received by Company by the required time we will assume that you will not be participating on the retreat and cancellation charges in accordance with Section 3 will apply.

Section 3. Cancellations. If you wish to cancel your retreat you must notify Company in writing. Once we've received your notice, cancellation will take effect subject to the following: If cancellation takes place more than _____ days prior to your departure date, any payments made will be refunded minus your deposit. If cancellation takes place _____ days prior to your retreat's start date, _____% of the retreat price will be forfeited. If cancellation takes place less than _____ days prior to your retreat's start date, _____% of the retreat price will be forfeited.

Section 4. Health and Fitness Requirements. You must be in good physical and mental health to participate in the retreat. You are advised to consult with a physician to ensure that you are in adequate health to safely participate in the retreat. Additionally, Company and the retreat leader reserve the right in their absolute discretion to refuse a participant the right to participate in a retreat on medical or fitness grounds.

Section 5. Cancellation Due to Retreat Booking Numbers. Company reserves the right to cancel any retreat prior to departure in the event that there are too few people booked in which case you will be given a full refund of any and all payments made to Company. You will not be entitled to claim any additional amounts or seek any compensation for any injury, loss, expenses or damage (either direct or consequential) or for any loss of time or inconvenience which may result from such cancellation.

Section 6. Changes, Postponement, Cancellation or Delay. Company reserves the right to make changes to any aspect of the retreat if, in the absolute discretion of Company, it is necessary to do so due to conditions that may be hazardous or dangerous or due to any other adverse or threatening conditions such as weather, political, military, terrorist or otherwise or for any other reason considered necessary by Company. If the designated trip leader is unable to lead the trip for any reason, Company, in its discretion, will enlist another teacher of substantially similar qualifications to lead the retreat. In the event of any change, postponement, cancellation, or delay, you acknowledge that you will have no right of refund of the retreat price in whole or in part and no right to claim compensation for any injury, loss or damage or other additional expenses incurred by virtue of the change, modification, cancellation, postponement or delay.

Section 7. Insurance. We strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance and it is your responsibility to make sure that you are adequately insured for the full duration of the retreat in respect to illness, injury, death, loss of personal items, cancellation, and curtailment.

Section 8. Travel Documents and Vaccinations. It is your responsibility to learn about and obtain all required travel documents for travel to the retreat destination.

Section 9. Photography. Company reserves the right to use photographs or videos from the retreat for promotional purposes. By making a reservation with Company, you agree to allow your image to be used in such photography. If you prefer that your image not be used, please notify Company in writing before the retreat commences and we will not use your image.

Section 10. Force Majeure. If Company and the trip leader are prevented from performing any of their obligations under this Agreement by acts of God, strikes, trade disputes, fire, weather, breakdowns, interruption of transport, government or political action, acts of war or terrorism, acts or omissions of a third party or for any other cause whatsoever outside Company and the trip leader's reasonable control, Company and the trip leader will be under no liability whatsoever to you and may either cancel or postpone the retreat.

Section 11. Release and Waiver of Liability. You release, waive, discharge, hold harmless and agree to indemnify Company, its officers, its employees, its agents, its licensees, teachers, independent contractors, other representatives, and retreat leaders (the "Released Parties") from all claims, actions or losses for personal injury, illness, emotional trauma, property damage, wrongful death, loss of services, loss of profits, as well as consequential, exemplary, indirect or punitive damages or otherwise that you may occur in connection with your participation in the retreat and any extra activities you may engage in during the retreat whether or not sponsored by the Company ("Claims"). You waive any Claims you have, or may at any time have, against the Released Parties and you agree not to make any Claim against any Released Party.

I agree to all the terms listed above.

_____ (signature of participant)

_____ (today's date)