



Beyond Vacation: Going on Retreat

Q: My summer vacation time is approaching, and I'd like to devote at least part of it to quiet reflection in a serene setting. What resources would point me to some good retreat centers?

A: Well, let me tell you about a couple of free resources first.

Its title sounds little hokey, but the website "[Find the Divine](http://www.findthedivine.com/)" offers a fairly comprehensive listing of retreat centers around the country and overseas. You'll notice, for example, that the site offers a link to [retreat centers by state](http://www.findthedivine.com/states/frameRetStates.html). Once you click on a specific state, the web page will show featured centers and camps, with photos and descriptions.

But to find a list of *all* the centers in the state, scroll to the bottom of the page. There you'll see the name, city, phone number, and religious orientation of each center. Use Google to search on the retreat name and go to the retreat center's website. And call or e-mail the center *before* reserving a spot; you want to be sure the center offers what you're seeking.

Take a look also at the [Retreat Finder](http://www.retreatfinder.com/) website. This site offers a similar opportunity to browse by state, but in addition it provides a [search engine](http://www.retreatfinder.com/Search.aspx) that enables you to hone in on the specific type of retreat you're interested in—including personal, self-guided retreats.

Now, if you want to learn more about either the retreat experience or retreat centers before going on retreat, there are some helpful books out there. Margaret Silf's [*Going on Retreat: A Beginner's Guide to the Christian Retreat Experience*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0829419942) can be particularly useful for retreat "newcomers." Silf discusses spiritual direction and such disciplines as the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. The centers she describes are in the Roman Catholic or Anglican tradition.

If you especially want to do a personal retreat, check out [*Resting Place: A Personal Guide to Spiritual Retreats*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/0830833366), by Jane Rubietta. This book explores the spiritual dimensions of retreats and is *not* a reference tool for finding a retreat center. But its chapters—on solitude, creativity, and strength—will be illuminating for the sincere retreatant.

Finally, I'm happy to report that an updated edition of [*Sanctuaries, The Complete United States: A Guide to Lodgings in Monasteries, Abbeys, and Retreats*](http://www.amazon.com/dp/1440181608) was published in 2010. For those who want to thoughtfully compare retreat centers—and those who want to visit centers that accept persons from a variety of faith traditions—this book is likely your best bet.

If you know of additional resources on this topic, please [e-mail us with your suggestions](mailto:cgreer@alban.org). We would appreciate it!

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