

## GET AWAY FROM IT ALL: HAVE A RETREAT!

**Why retreat?** Chapters are encouraged to hold at least one retreat each year. "Retreat" doesn't mean running away--it means strategically planning a break from the routine to analyze, reflect, evaluate, and renew commitments. It provides an opportunity for individuals and the organization as a whole to get away from campus and the demands of school and to take an objective look at one's self and one's organization.

A fraternity or sorority consumes most of the extracurricular time of its members; so, if it doesn't address the needs of members as whole persons (mentally, socially, physically, and spiritually), it tends to produce unbalanced individuals--long in social graces, but far short in spiritual and character development. The retreat can bring the whole person into focus and help to create well-rounded and well-adjusted individuals.

On a retreat, your chapter can:

- Strengthen bonds and cooperation among members and pledges/associate members.
- Find solutions to specific problems in the chapter.
- Evaluate past and present programs.
- Develop new programs and policies.
- Overcome internal dissension or apathy and improve inner-chapter relations.
- Design programs for creative and meaningful chapter experiences.
- Build inspiration among chapter members.

If you're an experienced retreat planner, get ready to improve and develop your chapter's retreat tradition. If you've never planned a retreat, here's your chance for a new success. The first chapter retreat is often the hardest to get underway. It requires "selling" the idea to the chapter. But, fortunately, enthusiasm is contagious; one or two concerned members of the chapter can be instrumental in firing up the whole organization. Talking with other chapter leaders and inviting in some resource persons who have had experience with retreats is often very helpful. The resource person might be invited to speak to the whole chapter about the value of retreats and specific planning strategies. **Remember: Advance preparation is the key to a successful retreat!**

*When should a chapter retreat be held?* When needed! A retreat should be a standard part of any semester or year's calendar. It can be planned for the fall as a "Welcome Back" activity and an orientation for newly-initiated members, and in the spring to refresh and renew understandings of what the chapter really stands for--its values, its character, its services. Or, it can serve as a year-end review to analyze the chapter's past activities and improve them for next year.

*Where should a chapter retreat be held?* Get away from the campus environment and, if possible, away from the city. A YMCA camp, a resort during off-season, a state park, motel, lake property, school-owned conference center, and other similar locations are ideal retreat settings. These locations help create an informal attitude and enhance togetherness, eliminate distractions, and help people relax.

*Who should attend a chapter retreat?* All members are expected to attend, and many chapters include their new members. The more outside resource people you can invite to participate, the better. Obviously, alumni/alumnae are invaluable and a faculty advisor, Greek Life staff member, or staff person from the campus counseling center can be extremely effective in group dynamics programming.

*What are the basic objectives of a chapter retreat?* There are five distinct areas of emphasis:

1. To review the past--where you have been; what you have accomplished; and what your past programs, policies, activities, and attitudes have been. The things that have worked well in the past should be continued. Less successful ones should be revised or eliminated.
2. To observe the present--where you are now; what your present programs, policies, activities, and attitudes are; your degree of satisfaction with them. If you're not satisfied, consider improvements, changes, or additions that can help.
3. To project the future--where do you want to go? After you've assessed the past and present, you can create a vision for your chapter's future and develop programs that will bridge the gaps between where you are now and where you want to be.
4. To renew enthusiasm and dedication--by bringing together members to discuss problems and find solutions, you help them become more involved in chapter life. When members can openly discuss, criticize, and "vent," as well as having fun together, they become more effective and satisfied team players.
5. To enjoy! --without any outside interference. You'll be surprised how much fun it is when the whole chapter is relaxing together.

## **How should a retreat be developed and structured?**

Here is a brief outline for retreat planning:

1. Seek the support of the Executive Committee of your chapter.
2. Check your manuals, inter/national literature, and outside resources (such as the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs) for ideas and program outlines.
3. Ask the chapter to determine areas of concern and interest that could be addressed at the retreat-- use a chapter survey or discuss this at a chapter meeting.
4. Present the retreat plan to the chapter.
5. Get the chapter's approval for the retreat plans.
6. Form a Retreat Committee to:
  - a. Select, secure, and handle all matters regarding retreat location.
  - b. Select the best date and time for the chapter, and determine the length of the retreat. (Remember to avoid exam times and religious holidays that affect members of the chapter.)
  - c. Determine the support needed--food, bedding, recreational equipment, program materials--and arrange for transportation. Design your retreat program.
7. Design your retreat program
8. Have the Retreat Committee report to the chapter their progress in planning the event.
9. Ensure the attendance of all members.
10. During the retreat:
  - a. Allow freedom of expression, urging all members to say what they really feel.
  - b. Encourage the expression of ideas, no matter how absurd they may seem. Help members feel "safe" and respected.
  - c. Control horseplay, alcohol/drug use, and other distractions.
  - d. Have organized recreational activities, snack breaks, good and ample food, adequate heat/ac, chairs, and other comforts.
  - e. Assign tasks to committees or individuals to ensure follow-up on all matters covered during the retreat.
  - f. Have participants evaluate the success of the retreat.
11. Send thank-you letters to outside resource people who helped with the retreat planning and programs.
12. Then ... schedule your next retreat!

### **Cornell University Sites:**

1. Cornell Plantations  
One Plantations Road  
607-255-2404

Cornell Plantations is a museum of living plants with a network of trails through campus providing areas for hiking and nature study. Plantations' grounds are open free of charge to individuals and families from sunrise to sunset daily.

2. Hoffman Challenge Course on Mount Pleasant  
Cornell Teambuilding, The Field House  
Campus Road  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
607-254-7474  
[www.cornell.edu](http://www.cornell.edu)

Teambuilding facility offering programs designed to foster the building of trust, the development of leadership and communication skills, and breaking the ice in groups of new people.

### ***Sites Outside of Cornell:***

#### **State Parks**

- 1) Allan H. Treman State Marine Park  
Route 89 (Taughannock Blvd.)  
607-272-1460

The largest inland marina in the state with 399 berths, 360 for seasonal and 39 for transient use. Showers, picnic tables, fishing, boat launch areas, marina, pump out station.

- 2) Buttermilk Falls State Park  
Route 13 South  
607-273-5761

Buttermilk Creek descends more than 500 feet in a series of cascades and rapids. A natural pool at the base of Buttermilk Falls is available for swimming, and a scenic trail circles Lake Treman. Ten/trailer sites (no electric), trailer dump station, showers, cabins picnic area, shelters, swimming, hiking trails, fishing playground areas, limited cross-country skiing, summer recreation program.

- 3) Chenango Valley State Park  
153 State Park Road  
Chenango Forks, NY 13746  
607-648-5251

Two kettle lakes. Campers can choose from among 216 campsites and 24 cabins. Facilities area, available biking, fishing, ice skating, sledding, nature walks, pavilions and picnic tables are also available

- 4) Robert H. Treman State Park  
Route 327 (off Route 13 South)  
607-273-3440

Enfield Glen is the scenic highlight of this park. Ten/trailer sites (some electric), trailer dump station, showers, cabins, picnic areas, shelters, swimming, gorges, hiking trails, fishing, playground areas, limited cross-country skiing, summer recreation program, old mill located at upper park.

- 5) Taughannock Falls State Park  
Taughannock Park Road (Route 89)  
607-387-6739

Exciting to view in any season, the 215 foot falls plunge through a rock amphitheater whose walls reach nearly 400 feet. Tent/trailer sites (some electric), trailer dump station, showers, cabins, concession, picnic areas, swimming (beach) shelters, hiking trails, nature trails, fishing, playground areas, marina launching site, pump out station, ice skating, sledding slope, limited cross-country skiing, summer recreation program.

### **Cabins and Cottages**

- 1) Willowood Resort, Campground Cabins & Lodges  
28 Rockwell Road  
Newfield, NY 14867  
(607) 272-6087

Spacious wooded sites, cabins, restaurants, pool, fishing, playground, and live entertainment. Banquet facilities for weddings, reunions, meetings for up to 500 people.

- 2) Whitetail Crossing Cottages  
21 Belvedere Drive  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-257- 3946  
[www.realithaca.com/whitetail](http://www.realithaca.com/whitetail)

Spring, summer & fall rentals on the lake. Two and three bedroom cottages. 950' of lakefront on 52 acres with a 100' dock.

- 3) Angel Arms B&B & Wellness Center  
481 Lafayette Road  
Groton, NY 13073  
607- 838-2645  
[www.lightlink.com/angel](http://www.lightlink.com/angel)

Relaxing newly-renovated barn with several rooms featuring cathedral ceilings and rustic beams.

- 4) Spruce Row Campsites & RV Resort  
2271 Kraft Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-387-9225  
[www.campgrounds.com/sprucerow](http://www.campgrounds.com/sprucerow)

Between Rts. 96 and 89, seven miles north of Ithaca on Kraft Road high above Cayuga Lake and near Taughannock Falls. Swimming pools, playgrounds, recreation buildings, mini golf, pond and paddle boats, and hiking trails. Several types of open or shaded spacious RV and tent sites.

- 5) Rainbow Cove Resort Motel and Restaurant (on Seneca Lake)  
3482 Plum Point Road  
Himrod, NY 14842  
607-243-7355

Sloping grass waterfront, private pier with sun cots boat slips and launching available. A spacious boardwalk extends over the lake. A large recreation room, game room and in-ground swimming pool are also available for guests.

- 6) Wright's Cottages on Waneta Lake  
607-292-6786

Five comfortably furnished cottages with fireplaces. Rowboats, paddleboats, kayaks & canoes included.

- 7) Camp Echo Lake  
Hudson Street  
Warrensburg, NY 12885  
518-623-3316  
[www.campecholake.com](http://www.campecholake.com)

Camp Echo Lake is a multipurpose facility that can accommodate up to 750 people overnight and 3,000 for day use.

### **Country Inns**

- 1) La Tourelle Country Inn  
1150 Danby Road, Route 96B  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-273-2734

Unique European style 35 room inn with spacious rooms and marvelous views, 70 acres of countryside, hiking trails and tennis court. Banquet facility with canopied patio.

- 2) Taughannock Farms Inn  
2030 Gorge Road, Route 89 & Taughannock Falls State Park  
Trumansburg, NY 14886  
607-387-7711  
[www.t-farms.com](http://www.t-farms.com)

Victorian mansion with five guest rooms and three guest houses. Banquet facilities available.

- 3) Fountainebleau Inn  
2800 State Route 228  
Alpine, NY 14805  
607-594-2008

Fountainebleau is a Historical Inn set on a small lake 17 miles from Ithaca. Great country views, rolling lawns and majestic trees. Banquet facilities for 150, plus 3 bed-breakfast rooms.

- 4) Aurora Inn  
391 Main St.  
Aurora, NY  
315-364-8888  
866-364-8808 (toll free)  
[www.aurora-inn.com](http://www.aurora-inn.com)

The Aurora Inn is set on the shores of Cayuga Lake and is an excellent venue for small and medium-sized business meetings and events. The private conference facilities can comfortably accommodate groups of up to 75 people for classroom-style meetings or 100 people for theater-style presentations.

---

This listing is not an endorsement of the retreat sites above and in no way establishes a legal relationship between Cornell University and the retreat sites. Cornell University assumes no legal responsibility for the supervision or control of a retreat held at any of these sites.