

Coordinating a Local Men's Knitting Retreat

Overview

The Men's Knitting Retreats were first established in May of 2008, and their popularity became apparent quite soon. Many of the guys who had the experience of attending a knitting retreat, or heard about one from a friend, but couldn't attend because of distance, or who wanted to establish one in their own area, decided to create one for their local guy-knitters.

So far, there have been Men's Knitting Retreats in the following locations:

- U.S. West Coast (San Francisco and Seattle areas)
- U.S. East Coast (Upstate New York)
- U.S. Midwest (Ann Arbor/Kalamazoo area)
- U.S. Southeast (South Carolina)
- U.S. Rocky Mountain (Estes Park)
- U.K. Mid Wales (Welshpool area)
- New Zealand (Havelock North area)
- Canada East Coast (Guelph, Ontario)

This document is a compilation of some the general suggestions and ways that we found worked in establishing a local men's knitting retreat.

Principles of The Men's Knitting Retreats

While not hard and fast rules, we found that it was easier to establish some basic tenets about all retreats so that men's knitting retreats around the World would have some level of consistency and the general experience of the guys who attend different retreats would be similar.

The purpose of the Men's Knitting Retreats is to provide an opportunity for men with an interest in any or all fiber crafts to gather and experience the community and fraternity of like-minded men in beautiful setting.

The following is a list of suggestions for the retreats:

1. The retreats are for men only. Anyone who self-identifies as a man is eligible to participate in the event.

2. The retreats are self-supporting and self-managed by self-designated coordinators and the participants. While having outside organizations sponsor portions of the retreats is acceptable, those organizations should have no say in how the retreat is conducted.
3. The retreats are ideally not-for-profit and not-for-loss.

Steps for Establishing a Local Retreat

Establish that there is an interest for a retreat in the local areas – general interest can be determined via forums (menwhoknit.com, Ravelry MKR Forums, Facebook Groups, etc.)

Determine the coordinator(s) for the event – it's often easier with two coordinators to share the workload

Contact Men's Knitting Retreat via the web site to notify them of any plans

Identify a venue for the retreat

- Costs, down payments
- Minimum/Maximum number of participants
- Contract requirements/restrictions
- Liability insurance requirements of the retreat site
- Food/catering arrangements – accommodating dietary requirements (vegetarian, gluten-intolerance, veganism, etc.)
- Types of housing accommodations
- Types of meeting rooms
- Scenic locations and areas tend to fit in better with the overall concept of a retreat
- How easy/difficult is transportation to/from the venue?
 - o Is it close to airports, train stations, bus depots, etc.
 - o Does the retreat provide local transportation
 - o Are there shuttles or vans that can bring participants to and from the airport/train station, etc.
- Are there local road trips that can be scheduled
 - o Sheep/alpaca/goat farms
 - o Spinning mills
 - o Exceptional yarn stores
 - o Fiber-related business (spinning wheel manufacturers, dyeing companies, etc.)

Establish a budget and associated costs for registration

- Retreat center costs
- Registration fees (PayPal costs, etc.)
- Administrative Costs (binders, copies, postage, thank you cards, phone, name tags, etc.)

- Your Compensation - consider building in your cost of transportation, room & board, and also some stipend for the other coordinator(s)

Determine the agenda for the retreat

- Workshops (you may want to slot in 3 hour time slots for workshops allowing for participants to volunteer their talents to lead workshops)
- Show & Tell
- Yarn crawls
- Field trips
- Movie night
- Group photo

After the retreat

- Finalize all finances
- Send out thank-you notes to any vendors/donors/sponsors
- Send out group photo or roster of participants to the guys who attended

Identify Donors/Sponsors - people that you know or can contact for donations of bags, goodie bag includes, raffle prizing, binder includes (like patterns, business cards, etc.)

Centralized Support

An informal umbrella organization has been established to help coordinated the local events and maintain some level of consistency across the various retreats. The following are some of the ways that you can find some support for your local retreat:

1. Web Site presence – We maintain a web site at <http://mensknittingretreat.com> which contains information about the retreats, scheduled events, information about past events and ways to contact the organization via e-mail.
2. Social Media Promotion – Forums, Pages, Groups and Events have been set up on Ravelry and Facebook to support social media participation and promotion of the event.
3. E-Mail Notification List – A list of anyone who has requested to be notified when registration opens for any of the retreats is maintained centrally. Notifications are sent out as requested by the local coordinators.
4. On-line forms – We can easily create on-line forms for registration, scholarship nominations, surveys, etc.
5. Printed document templates:
 - a. Name tags

- b. Fliers for advertising
- c. Budgets
- d. Agendas

Marketing Your Retreat

Local yarn stores or fiber events

Creating a flier to hand out or hang in your local yarn store or at vendor tables at various fiber events can let local men know about the event.

Ravelry Forums

Ravelry (the largest on-line fiber-related community) has a forum specifically dedicated to having discussions about various local retreats. There are also many local forums that might allow you to post a note about an upcoming retreat.

Facebook Events and Groups

Setting up a page, event or group on Facebook and inviting your Facebook friends to participate is a way of spreading the word.

Twitter

Blogs

E-Mail Notification List

Men's Knitting Retreat Web Site

Other Knitting Retreats

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. Is there a minimum age limit to attend the retreat.

A. Local coordinators can make individual decisions about the age limit of the participants, but we suggest no one under 21 year old be allowed to attend.

Q. Can someone who is transgendered attend a retreat?

A. Anyone who self-identifies as a man is welcome to attend a Men's Knitting Retreat.

Q. Are the retreats only for (or mostly for) gay men?

A. While there are a number of gay men that attend the events, the retreats are open to all men.

Q. Can a participant bring his spouse to the event?

A. As long as the spouse is a man, the spouse is welcome to join, even if he isn't a knitter.

Q. Can alcohol be served/brought to the event?

A. Each group determines its own policies for decisions such as alcohol. Most retreats allow for alcohol to be consumed at the event.

Q. How many days should the retreat be?

A. Most retreats are 3 or 4 days (usually Friday through Sunday or Thursday through Sunday). When first starting a new retreat, it's easier and less costly to set up the 3 day retreat and then decide with the group for the following year whether to extend it to four days. Some retreats also allow for unofficial days before or after the retreat to allow guys who would prefer to stay longer to do so.

Q. Can women be invited to give a talk or provide a demonstration at the retreat?

A. One of the suggestions is that workshops and classes be facilitated by our own members, which would preclude having a woman or any paid expert provide a demonstration or workshop. There have been field trips or outside classes that have included both paid-for and female teachers or experts.

Q. Is there a policy on publishing photographs or videos of the retreat or inviting the public media or documentarians into the event?

A. Each regional retreat determines their own policies on this and communicates it to the participants.