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Smart Meetings

The Intelligent way to plan in the Western Region



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Executive Retreats

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Features

For a change of pace, think and play at some of the West's most inspiring locales

When you think about the meaning behind the word “retreat,” it brings to mind concepts such as withdrawal, surrender and taking a step back. And though they sound counterintuitive, it's nonetheless true that in today's cutthroat corporate world, taking any of these actions can actually serve to give top executives a significant edge over competitors.

Many people will say that their most brilliant revelations come from a moment of withdrawal from the world, a voluntary seclusion that somehow fostered a new and focused way of thinking. When you get away from the day-to-day norm—no matter how decked out your corner office or board room is—you become better able to zoom out, gain perspective and focus on the big picture.

Whether your group needs to recapture that creative spark, refocus its mission or just get on the same page again, there's no better way to do it than out of context, away from stress and in an utterly gorgeous place that caters to your every collective whim. That's where the big revelations happen.

Your choice of where to regroup is important. What would inspire your team more: An upscale urban hideaway in a city that's not your own? Rugged, rustic luxury in the mountains? Exotic coastal surroundings? Dramatic desert vistas?

Whatever your environs, you're going to want to make very sure that your venue provides the level of unparalleled comfort and service your small, high-powered group is used to; after all, a flash of inspiration is unlikely to arrive during a bout of frustration at the lack of room service after 10 p.m.

The following high-end properties and experiences certainly fit the bill; they're set in beautiful surroundings, staffed with intuitive people who almost predict your every need. Most importantly, they have that certain unnamable factor that makes them simply perfect for smaller high-level groups, such as a board of directors, to be able to achieve that needed change of pace.

LUXE IN THE CITY**LANGHAM HUNTINGTON HOTEL AND SPA**

In the L.A. area, the new Langham Huntington Hotel and Spa (it's occupied the Ritz-Carlton's old digs since January), is the closest AAA Five-Diamond hotel to downtown. Your attendees will much prefer its upscale Pasadena location, though, backdropped by the San Gabriel Mountains. With an old-money feel and a secluded address, this 100-year-old property is made unique by a Michelin-reviewed restaurant, a Japanese garden and 40 murals of California scenery.

Its indoor and outdoor event spaces are truly notable, as are its lodging spaces; opt for the hotel's club level (perks include private elevator key access and five daily food presentations) or one of the eight cottages that sit separate from the main hotel. Room amenities include BVLGARI toiletries, Egyptian cotton textiles and marbled bathrooms. The British-inspired service includes afternoon tea and Clefs d'or concierge service; on-property diversions include the Huntington Spa, tennis courts, Nicklaus golf and bike rentals.

RUSTIC (BUT NOT REMOTE)**WILDSPRING GUEST HABITAT**

WildSpring Guest Habitat, an eco-friendly resort 60 miles north of California on Oregon's undeveloped

south coast, is an ideal venue for small executive gatherings. Groups looking for a quiet spot surrounded by natural beauty should book this intimate five-acre resort, which sits nestled in a forest of 100-foot-high trees. Each of the five cabin suites has a bedroom and living room. In-room massages are available, as are engaging workshops such as a drumming circle or how to make a Native American dream catcher.

Up to 22 people can stay overnight, and meeting facilities can accommodate 30. An opulent continental breakfast buffet is available each morning in a hall overlooking the ocean; other meals are customizable according to a group's preferences.

MOUNTAIN LODGE AT TELLURIDE

When searching for high-altitude inspiration, don't overlook Mountain Lodge at Telluride, a ski-in property that epitomizes the rustic-yet-upscale vibe. Set at 9,500 feet in Colorado's San Juan Mountains, this slopeside resort offers Western charm as well as privacy despite being within easy access of everything in Telluride (no wonder it's popular with celebrities).

Its two 30-person conference rooms are cozy and functional, while the large poolside space is popular for outdoor summer functions. Accommodations here are generously outfitted with sumptuous furniture, pine cabinetry, flagstone accents, gas fireplaces and a private balcony or patio. Many of the rooms also have jetted tubs, first-class mountain views and kitchens or kitchenettes with granite countertops.

The property partners with Action Learning, Inc. to offer team-building sessions in the property or out in walkable Telluride, a National Historic Landmark District. Local activities include world-class skiing and snow activities (late November through early April), shopping, spas, museums, theater and golf. The free gondola will take you anywhere you want to go.

NEWPARK HOTEL

Park City, Utah's luxurious hub of fine food, shopping and outdoor activities, Newpark Resort, a mixed-use design concept that's participating in the eco-conscious LEED program, is home to Newpark Hotel, which opened earlier this year. Its spacious suites are graced with modern mountain décor, and many of them offer views of the Swaner Nature Preserve, Utah Olympic Park or the three local ski resorts. Amenities here include a fitness center with an indoor-outdoor pool, ski shuttle service and access to group activities like skiing, golfing, theater and fine dining (the resort plans to open new restaurants in the coming months).

KALALOCH LODGE

Kalaloch Lodge, a rustic retreat operated by ARAMARK in Washington's Olympic National Park, is a coastal getaway with access to no less than seven beaches. Kalaloch, pronounced "clay-lock," means "land of plenty" in the language of the Quinault Native Americans, and there really is plenty to do here, from hiking along the coast or in the nearby rainforest, to bird- and whale-watching (fall is best for this), to taking ranger-led tidepool walks.

The warmly decorated Becker's and Kalaloch suites, both of which are 500 sq. ft., are ideal for small, upscale meetings. Groups can also opt to gather high on a bluff overlooking the Pacific, or in the lodge's restaurant, which serves traditional Pacific Northwest cuisine alongside dramatic ocean views.

The pet-friendly sleeping quarters include 44 cabins (20 with ocean views) and 10 rooms in the historic Main Lodge. A caveat, though: In deference to the serene atmosphere, many of the lodging rooms don't have phones, TVs or Internet access. The upside? Your group can either bliss out or focus in without distraction.

THE FAIRMONT JASPER PARK LODGE

Alberta, Canada's Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge, built more than 80 years ago in Jasper National Park, provides the quintessential mountain experience. Offering seclusion in an alpine-village-style layout on the shores of a glacier-fed lake, the caliber here is that of any Fairmont property: appropriately sophisticated with high-level service.

Its signature cabins work well as living quarters and as the setting for an upscale meeting. Crafted from natural materials to fit into the mountain environs, these cedar chalets come with a generous kitchen, living room (with fireplace), veranda and private parking.

Meeting space consists of 18 state-of-the-art function rooms, which accommodate groups as small as 10, as well as spaces near the highly rated golf course or overlooking the lake. Consider, too, the Outlook Cabin, a six-room log structure that was rebuilt in 2001 based on the floor plans of the 1930 original, which had hosted many significant people, including King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

Business services here include a dedicated conference registration desk, on-site A/V support and a business center. Hotel staff can help you arrange group activities including boating, biking, interpretive walking programs and river float trips.

PATH FITNESS RETREAT

Your group will be grateful for having had the opportunity to try the unique concept behind PATH Fitness Retreat ("Pure and Total Health"). It's an exercise-based experiential retreat that operates under the premise that inspiration and clarity are likeliest to arrive when you're out of your element, trying something new—and addressing the most important aspect of your life: your health.

Set in idyllic Mill Valley, about an hour north of San Francisco, this one-week program for a maximum of 12 attendees focuses mainly on nature hiking, since walking has been known throughout history to be one of the most idea-generating activities. ("Let's take a walk," remember, is one of the oldest ways of starting a productive conversation.) The dramatic ocean views and redwood forests can't hurt, either.

The size of the property used will depend on a group's specific needs, while fitness programs are tailored to meet a group's collective goals. Daily activities include meditation, yoga, strength training, healthful eating—and a massage every night.

EXOTIC CHARMS

HALEKULANI

Halekulani is quite possibly Oahu's best-looking hotel. Its effortless grace and jealousy-inducing tropical elegance, along with its earnest service and oceanfront location in the heart of Waikiki, make it an easy choice for any planner looking to book an upscale retreat in the 50th state.

Groups of 20 will fit well into the 621-square-foot Kalia Room and 515-square-foot Kiawa Room, both of which have views of the property's manicured courtyard. There's also a well-stocked gym, fitness classes, a business center and a remarkable swimming pool; its bottom is an orchid mosaic made of more than a million pieces of colorful African glass.

Guest rooms feature large lanais, many with views of the light-blue ocean, flat-screen TVs, deep-soaking tubs, twice-daily housekeeping service and a welcome amenity of fruit and housemade chocolates.

FIESTA AMERICANA GRAND LOS CABOS

At the Baja California peninsula's southernmost tip, with clean, elegant décor that coincides with the rugged beach setting, Fiesta Americana Grand Los Cabos makes for a place that no one would mind traveling to, even for work purposes.

There are board rooms as well as open-air venues for meetings and luxurious guest rooms, most with a balcony or terrace, to retreat to. For further relaxation, attendees will want to head to Somma, the property's wine-themed spa offering antioxidant vinotherapy treatments that incorporate grapes from the nearby Guadalupe Valley.

SAVE ROOM FOR DESERT

VICEROY PALM SPRINGS

Abutting the dramatic San Jacinto Mountains is the one-of-a-kind Viceroy Palm Springs, a cutting-edge property with a boutique atmosphere and a beyond-stylish vibe. Good for hip groups that appreciate life's chic-er things, the lodgings here are somehow simultaneously simplistic and ornate.

For more pampering, the indoor-outdoor Estrella Spa has a yoga terrace, salon services and expertly administered signature treatments that include the Epicuren Classic Facial.

When it's time to get down to business, your group will get going in the Presidio Meeting Room, a banquet-ready reception space with French doors that open to a pretty private courtyard. Additionally, a converted one-bedroom villa can be booked for private dinner parties or for 12-person meetings.

Local group activities can include jeep tours, horseback riding, hot-air ballooning and golfing at famous nearby courses. Happy hour is at the swank new White Bar, adjacent to the property's acclaimed Citron restaurant. To build camaraderie among attendees, opt for the Cocktail Challenge, wherein groups devise their own buzz-inducing concoctions; experienced Viceroy staffers coordinate the event (or any other you'd like) and serve as judges.

KORAKIA

Also in Palm Springs is Korakia, a century-old downtown refuge to which artists and writers flock for the kind of rejuvenation and inspiration that comes from the feeling of being in a completely different time and place. Done in throwback Mediterranean and Moroccan style, this retreat, graced with olive trees, citrus blossoms, date palms and bougainvillea, provides highly personal service and the option of buying out the entire 28-room property.

The property's indoor meeting spaces can accommodate up to 14 people, while the outdoor space can host up to 30. Breakout sessions can be set up around one of two heated pools, and private dinners can be arranged with exotic entertainment and belly dancing. The largest suite, called the Orchard House, ensures total privacy for meetings. Korakia's staff can assist with planning group excursions, including hiking, biking, golf and tennis.

Much of Korakia offers views of Tahquitz Canyon and the San Jacinto Mountains, and there are waterfalls, fountains and fire pits throughout the property. Note that guest rooms lack TVs and phones, but do have Wi-Fi.

Guests here begin the day with a full cooked breakfast in the main courtyard and enjoy Moroccan tea service each afternoon. Classic and foreign films play on the outdoor screen, and free yoga lessons happen on weekend mornings (upon request, additional weekday classes can be scheduled). The indoor-outdoor spa administers therapies using products infused with exotic oils from Egypt, Greece and India.

INTERCONTINENTAL MONTELUCIA

In Scottsdale, Ariz., the InterContinental Montelucia Resort & Spa, slated to open this August, will be the brand's first spa-centric property—and an ideal place for your group to collectively wind down and get back in touch with what's important while surrounded by a relaxing desert landscape.

The 31,100-square-foot spa will incorporate 5,200 sq. ft. of outdoor space and 23 treatment rooms including meditation suites and private cabanas. In addition to its signature treatments, the spa will extend complimentary hydrotherapy treatments and the 25-minute Hammam-style therapy to each guest.

As for meeting rooms, there will be 16, plus the 3,000-square-foot Andalusian and Vistoso suites, which come with both a private patio and pool.

Guest accommodations will consist of suites and villas featuring flat-screen TVs, luxury beds, large work areas and terrace patios with views of the pool or of Camelback Mountain. On-site services will include a full-service concierge staff, limo transportation, catered food and beverage service and a fine-dining restaurant with décor inspired by Michelangelo's works in Florence.

MIRAVAL RESORT

In the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains, Tucson's all-inclusive Miraval Resort offers a health-focused getaway that's both luxurious and private. Executive groups of up to 84 people can benefit from programs like Mindful Decision Making and Mindful Stress Mastery as well as options like Zen Boot Camp and expert-led guidance about how to achieve the kind of deep, refreshing sleep that boosts memory and improves judgment and concentration.

Certain activities are particularly geared toward building group trust and risk tolerance: have your group try balancing and moving as one on a wood platform or encourage one of its members to leap off a 35-foot pole. Guest rooms are casita-style, and each stay includes a daily spa treatment. Try something new, like a craniosacral therapy, shiatsu, acupuncture or a Sonoran mud wrap.

Related Properties

- [The Langham, Huntington Hotel & Spa](#)

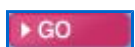
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