

PLANNING A BUSINESS RETREAT
A THOUGHTFUL GUIDE

01962 779 668

tara@thegrangehampshire.co.uk

thegrangehampshire.co.uk

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to support you in planning and delivering a successful business retreat.

In the pace of everyday business, it's rare to have the time or headspace to properly step back. Conversations are squeezed between deadlines and the bigger questions about direction, culture and how teams work together often go unanswered.

A well-designed retreat creates this space.

By taking people away from their usual working environment, retreats provide focused time for teams to reflect, align and reconnect. They allow room for both the **what** – goals, challenges and priorities, and the **how** – how people collaborate, communicate and support one another.

Spending meaningful time together matters. Eating together, walking, cooking and sharing the same space builds trust and human connection. When people are seen as whole individuals, not just co-workers, conversations become more open, which leads to more diverse ideas and teams feeling safer in speaking their minds.

Stronger relationships lead to better work. Teams with trust can challenge each other constructively, tackle difficult issues and make decisions faster. Problems that might take months to resolve in the office can often be addressed in a matter of hours when focus and perspective align.

For some, the idea of a retreat can feel daunting. Stepping away from the familiar, or spending extended time with colleagues, can feel exposing. In reality, we see the opposite. Shared experiences tend to reveal unexpected common ground – shared values, interests and motivations – strengthening team bonds rather than highlighting differences.

At its best, a business retreat nurtures people in all their dimensions. It creates an environment where individuals feel supported, included and valued – and where the business benefits from deeper relationships, better conversations and more resilient teams.

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WHO ARE THE GRANGE HAMPSHIRE?

We bring together a rare combination of ingredients that help make every retreat here meaningful and a success. Whether you're a small team seeking alignment and connection, or a larger group looking to collaborate and roadmap, our expert team is here to take the stress out of planning and delivering a bespoke business away day or overnight retreat.

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We just wanted to say a huge thank you for everything you've done to support our Optimise leadership retreats. Your attention to detail, flexibility and genuine care made a real difference - and it didn't go unnoticed.

From helping us navigate logistics to creating a welcoming and well-organised environment, you consistently went above and beyond to make sure everything ran smoothly. And the food has been amazing. So delicious. It's been a pleasure working with you and we're so grateful for the part you played in making these retreats such a success.

We will really miss our visits and hope to be back soon. Thanks again for all your support, it's truly appreciated!

LOUISA-JANE OLIVE, VIVID HOMES, SEPTEMBER 2025





WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR RETREAT?

The first step in planning a successful retreat is to clearly define its primary purpose. This may include strategy development, team bonding, training, celebration, leadership alignment, or a combination of others.

Deciding on the purpose first will help you make planning decisions for the retreat, including agenda, facilitation style, participant involvement and what, if any, additional activities might provide stimulus for the purpose to emerge.

WHAT ARE YOUR RETREAT OUTCOMES?

It is equally important to determine specific and measurable outcomes that the retreat should achieve. Defining how success will be measured - such as improved alignment, actionable plans, an increase in sales, identifying skills gaps, or team engagement - helps ensure the retreat is meaningful and an effective use of the company's time, budget and employees' focus.

USE THE SMART ACRONYM TO SET OUTCOMES:

Outcomes need to be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-specific





WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET?

Setting an overall budget from the outset is one of the most important steps in planning a successful retreat. It allows you to shape the experience and ensures expectations are aligned from the start.

Typical budget considerations are:

1. VENUE & ACCOMMODATION

Sharing your budget with the venue early on allows them to help co-create the retreat and maximise what's possible within it

2. FOOD & DRINK

A well-fed team is a happy team. Catering is often the simplest option if time or energy for self-catering is limited

3. FACILITATION

Not always necessary, but having someone to hold the schedule and guide discussions can be a valuable addition (see page 8)

4. TRAVEL & LOGISTICS

Consider where your team is based and how easy it is to reach the retreat location. Not everyone may have access to a car so car sharing should always be encouraged.

5. EXPERIENCES

Workshops, speakers or outdoor activities can add fresh perspective and energy to the retreat.

6. CONTINGENCY

It's difficult to anticipate every scenario, so allowing some flexibility for changes or additions is always worthwhile.

Not every retreat needs all of these elements, but considering them early helps avoid surprises later. The best retreats are also never defined by how much money is spent, but by how thoughtfully the available budget is used to create time, space and connection for your team.

EXAMPLE COSTINGS

To give you a sense of what is possible at The Grange Hampshire, we have included two indicative examples below. Final pricing will depend on group size, dates, accommodation requirements and the level of catering or support required.

3-day overnight retreat with full catering support, single occupancy bedrooms, approximately £955 including VAT per person based on 16 people attending.

3-day overnight self-catering retreat with single occupancy bedrooms, approximately £410 including VAT per person based on 9 people attending.



WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Once purpose, outcomes and budget have been clearly defined, you can turn your attention to who should attend the retreat. Being intentional about the delegate list is crucial – each person should either bring value to the conversations or gain clear value from being there.

Inviting too many people or the wrong mix can dilute focus and make it harder to reach meaningful outcomes. A smaller, well-chosen group often creates more open discussion, stronger engagement and better decision making than a larger, less focused one.

Think carefully about the roles people play in the business and the decision makers needed. Who will be responsible for implementing outcomes once the retreat is over? In some cases, it may be appropriate to include just a core leadership, in others, a boarder cross-section of the business can bring valuable perspectives and insights.

Understanding the needs and preferences of your attendees will also inform your planning and venue search. Factors to consider include:

1. Number of attendees
2. Willingness to share bedrooms / bathrooms
3. Accessibility or mobility requirements
4. Dietary needs or other personal considerations

Ultimately, the goal is to bring together the right people in the right environment, with the time and space to connect, contribute and move the business forward together.



WHAT EQUIPMENT & FACILITIES DO YOU NEED?

Being clear in advance about the equipment and facilities your team will need for meetings or workshops is key to a smooth and productive retreat.

Thinking through the requirements early – such as projectors, screens, flip charts, stationery, or suitable meeting and break-out spaces – allows you to discuss these needs with the potential venues before booking. The space can then be properly set up so you can hit the ground running when you arrive.

Typical facilities to consider:

MEETING SPACES:

flexible rooms with plenty of natural light that can be arranged for group discussion, presentations or smaller breakouts

AV & EQUIPMENT:

projectors, screens, speakers or microphones if needed

WORKSHOP TOOLS:

flipcharts, whiteboards, sticky notes, stationery etc

CONNECTIVITY:

Strong Wifi, power points and charging access

BREAK-OUT AREAS:

Informal indoor or outdoor spaces for smaller conversations

Beyond equipment, consider how the retreat will flow. A venue that offers adaptable spaces can support different working styles and energy levels throughout the retreat.





FINDING THE RIGHT VENUE

Whilst researching venues can feel daunting, now that you know the purpose, budget, attendees and what facilities you require, you've done most of the hard work. The setting for the retreat will shape the tone, influence how people feel, how they'll interact and therefore how effectively you'll achieve your outcomes.

Researching venues can feel daunting, answering the following questions will help you narrow down your search and identify locations that genuinely support the purpose of your retreat.



PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

START WITH LOGISTICS

- What is the maximum travel distance for delegates?
- Will most be travelling by car or public transport?
- Are there specific transport links needed (train stations, airports, major roads)?
- Will delegates be arriving and leaving on the same day or is overnight accommodation required?
- Are there any fixed dates or lead times to consider?

Being realistic about travel time and accessibility will significantly reduce friction and ensure attendees arrive feeling positive.

PEOPLE AND GROUP DYNAMICS

The make up of your group should also influence your venue choice.

- Is this an internal team retreat where everyone already knows each other, or will attendees be meeting for the first time?
- Would a more neutral, inspiring environment help people relax and connect more easily?
- Would delegates value the convenience and practicality of a town or city location, or the peace, privacy and space of a rural setting?

The right environment can help break down barriers, encourage openness and set the tone for more meaningful conversations.

FACILITIES AND FUNCTIONALITY

As discussed earlier, you must ensure the venue has the facilities to support how you plan to work:

- What facilities are essential – Wi-Fi, AV equipment, catering, walking routes?
- How many meeting or breakout spaces do you require for your meeting frame work?
- Is the space inspiring in itself – full of natural light, close to green space, supporting focus, creativity and connection?
- Is the food nourishing and aligned with the tone you want to set?

A refreshing and inspiring setting can have a powerful impact on energy, mood and engagement and can be an easy win if you get it right.

Finally, consider the venue team themselves. A venue that genuinely supports your vision – and is willing to guide, advise and collaborate is invaluable. Working with a team that wants to understand the purpose of a retreat and cares about the outcome will make the planning process smoother and give you confidence that everything is in safe hands.

The right venue doesn't just host the retreat – it actively supports its success.

DO YOU NEED FACILITATION?

Self-facilitating a retreat can be challenging for many teams, particularly when participants are also responsible for leading and contributing to discussions. An objective, outside perspective - such as that provided by an experienced coach or facilitator - can help keep the team focused, manage group dynamics and ensure that retreat objectives are met.

Coaches and facilitators bring a range of expertise, including strategy development, leadership alignment, team building and skills training. We collaborate with a diverse network of coaches and facilitators, each bringing their own area of expertise. We can connect you with the right person to provide tailored advice, guidance and support for your retreat.

BRAIN FOOD

Self-catering can be a distraction for groups whose primary focus is strategy and team development. In practice, responsibility for cooking and clearing up often falls to one or two people - sometimes those already tasked with organising the retreat.

Using professional catering to provide nourishing, well-timed meals helps keep energy levels high, minds sharp and spirits lifted. Whether you opt for a relaxed hearty spread, or a more structured menu, choose food that fuels focus, supports wellbeing and doesn't weigh delegates down.

Planning ahead for dietary requirements and meal timings ensures everyone can stay fully present and engaged throughout the retreat.

If budgets are constrained, consider pre-making as much as you can, but we always recommend at least one meal that's catered by others so that everyone can properly let their hair down.





ACTIVITIES

Adding additional activities to your agenda is a great way to boost team morale, break down barriers, foster new relationships and ultimately boost the success of your retreat. After all, who enjoys all work and no play?

The Grange Hampshire has a selection of activities available across the Estate to suit any group. The following are a few firm favourites.



VINEYARD & WINERY TOUR & TASTING

Take time to learn about English wine and get a behind-the-scenes tour at our winery to discover the craftsmanship and dedication our growers and makers pour into every bottle.

FORAGING EXPERIENCES

Discover the lost ancestral art of foraging and experience a new perspective an everyday simple walk can give with one of our guides.

THE GRANGE FESTIVAL (JUNE AND JULY ONLY)

A summer arts festival like nothing else you've ever seen before in a serene and magnificent setting. Expect opera, jazz, dance and more.

WILD SWIMMING

For those brave enough to handle the cold, enjoy a walk to one of the Estate's secluded wild swimming spots for an invigorating and immersive dip into nature.

TRAIL RUNNING

Join a member of our team on a run route across the Estate, taking in the quiet corners and off-road tracks. Pacing can be set to accommodate all running speeds or conversations whilst running.

HORSE RIDING

Take in the serene Hampshire scenery from on-high with guided hacks for groups up to five with friendly instructors in a calm, supportive setting.

PRIVATE BOUNCE CLASSES

Join our resident bouncer Becka for an exhilarating class on mini trampolines. Expect upbeat music, fast beats and 45-minutes of energising exercise.

SOURDOUGH PIZZA PARTIES

Enjoy freshly fermented sourdough pizzas straight from our Gozney oven. Choose your toppings and if you fancy a turn on the paddle, have a go at baking your own!

CIDER MAKING

Harvest apples from our orchards, press them and take home your own batch of cider in a demi-john to ferment at home. In the process, try some of last year's cider and experience the taste of freshly pressed apple juice.

COCKTAIL / MOCKTAIL WORKSHOPS

Unleash your inner mixologist with a fun and interactive cocktail-making experience! Perfect for team building at the end of a hard day's work.

FLORISTRY WORKSHOPS

In collaboration with one of our local florists, this hands-on workshop invites guests to slow down, get creative and explore the art of floral arranging using seasonal blooms and foliage.

FISHING

The Estate has seven beats of superb wild brown trout fishing for experienced anglers, or we can arrange lessons with guides for those looking to experience their first time.

CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING

There are few country pursuits that offer the thrill of clay pigeon shooting. Put your skills to the test and challenge your colleagues for top shot.

GUIDED ESTATE WALKS

One of our team would be happy to take your group on a guided walk, taking in the private grounds and stopping off at scenic, historic or wildlife hotspots.

HISTORIC TOUR OF THE GRANGE

Discover the journey of The Grange, encompassing a Royal tenant, a succession of banking families and the creation of a summer Arts Festival.

YOGA WITH CANDICE

Regardless of whether you've tried Yoga before, there's always something to learn in the world of yoga from a new instructor.

SINGING WITH TORI

Described as a musical force of nature, Tori can take you and your team to new harmonic heights, in a fun and engaging team singalong. An entertaining and surprisingly satisfying way to bring a team together.



TOP TIPS AND TRICKS FROM A BUSINESS FACILITATOR



SOPHIE ASHBURTON

The best retreats are a subtle mixture of comfort, challenge and a beautifully orchestrated journey over whatever time you have together. I try to plan every detail

of the time I spend with people. The small touches — how people are greeted and shown to their bedroom, whether there's a good mix of snacks for breaks — are the things that help delegates feel safe and held, versus things feeling a bit raggedy around the edges.

I think carefully about what will change the energy and I take care to plan in strategic walk-and-talks, moments of reflection and moments of upbeat joy and fun. Doing something a bit different together creates subtle, deeper connections and lifts the energy.

Watching your colleagues do something out of the ordinary - climbing a gate, handling an unusual mushroom, being encouraged to sing, or taking part in yoga or Pilates - is a great leveller and encourages openness and psychological safety. Sometimes it's as simple as gathering in the kitchen early in the morning with that all-important steaming cup of coffee.

The greatest skill is pacing and timing. It's easy to arrange too much and not allow space for the conversations that need time, or that simply emerge. Equally, you don't want to get stuck going around and around in one area. My top tip is to plan things to the nth degree and then be prepared to flex and let things go. The outcomes you're driving for are what matter — not a perfectly executed plan.

GET IN TOUCH

Having a solid starting point using the information in this guide will help you approach venues with clear plans, goals and ideas, making it easier to decide if a venue is the right fit for your team and your retreat.

Here at The Grange Hampshire, we start by having a conversation – gaining absolute clarity on what excellent looks like for you. We will then create a bespoke proposal based on your requirements.

Our team are here to support you every step of the way in creating and delivering a successful retreat.

TELEPHONE: 01962 779 668

EMAIL: tara@thegrangehampshire.co.uk





DISCOVER THE GRANGE

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01962 779 668

thegrangehampshire.co.uk