



Vallecitos Mountain Retreat Center Hermitage Information Packet

*We look forward to your arrival at Vallecitos Mountain Retreat Center! In order to ensure that your arrival and stay is comfortable, safe, and enjoyable, **we ask that you review this information carefully before you travel.** Please print all pertinent information and bring it with you. If you have any questions, please email our office at refuge@vallecitos.org.*

The Location: Vallecitos is a stunning wilderness retreat center and wildlife refuge located on 135-acres within the Carson National Forest in the mountains of northern New Mexico, eleven miles from paved road. The landscape is meadows and mixed aspen, ponderosa pine and spruce forest. There are seven ponds (including a swimming pond) and the Río Vallecitos runs through the middle of the property. In addition to an extensive network of hiking trails, Vallecitos is located within a short hike to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, which traverses over 3,000 miles between Canada and Mexico. We are a remote, off-the-grid retreat center offering rustic yet comfortable accommodations in a pristine and inspiring natural setting.

About the Hermitage: The Hermitage is a beautiful, secluded cabin overlooking the Río Vallecitos. It can accommodate 1-2 people. The Hermitage is exclusively for self-retreat. Though you will be staying at the Hermitage during a regularly scheduled Vallecitos retreat, you will not participate in the activities or schedule of the ongoing retreat. You are welcome to hike, rest, write, take photographs or meditate, but you will not be using the mediation hall. We will ask retreatants to respect your privacy (and silence) as you self-retreat – we also ask you to not engage participants in the ongoing retreat. Remember – at the Hermitage, you are practicing the life of a hermit!

The Hermitage is furnished with a queen-size bed, solar lighting, water cooler, hot plate for making tea/coffee (cooking is not permitted in the Hermitage), sun deck and its own outhouse. There are no electrical outlets for personal appliances or electronic devices. The goal at Vallecitos is to practice sustainable living by minimizing its environmental footprint.

Arrival and Schedule: If you are not using the Vallecitos provided shuttle, check-in is between 2:00--4:00 pm on the first day of your retreat. **PLEASE DO NOT ARRIVE LATER THAN 4:00 pm.** If you are traveling with the shuttle, the onsite staff will expect you with shuttle arrival between 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Retreat check-in: When you arrive at Vallecitos, use the gate code provided to open the gate. Follow signs directing you to the main lodge where the retreat manager or staff will provide arrival instructions. You will unload your belongings from your car, return your car to the parking spot across from the middle house (not the guest parking area), then return to the office to sign in and register for your daily work meditation job. Finally, you will take your belongings to the hermitage (a five minute walk with some uphill).

Departure & Check-out: Please check out by **11:00 a.m.** The retreat manager will provide instructions for cleaning the hermitage on your day of departure.

Assistance on the Day of Travel: If you need assistance on your day of travel, please call the retreat center office, 505-469-9017 (this is the emergency number that is listed throughout the retreat materials).



Travel to Vallecitos: To reach Vallecitos, you will need to drive, carpool or take the shuttle service. There is no alternate form of public transportation to the retreat center (i.e. bus or taxi).

- **Shuttle:** Please note that shuttle service is only available on a limited basis for hermitage guests. Email us at refuge@vallecitos.org to inquire about availability. For further information about the shuttle, visit our [website](#). In the event that you miss the Vallecitos shuttle, there is no alternate form of transportation to the ranch. If you miss the shuttle our on-call staff will do everything possible to assist you, but you will likely need to rent a car and drive to the ranch at your own expense.
- **Travel by car:** Precise directions to Vallecitos Mountain Retreat Center are included in the information you receive upon registration. The gate code will be provided via email prior to your arrival date. Please review your route to Vallecitos on a physical map before beginning your trip. Follow the directions we provide and do not attempt to take any "shortcuts", other routes, or rely on Google maps or GPS (both are unreliable and inaccurate in this area). The directions we provide are the safest, most expedient routes to the retreat center. If you don't follow these directions, you risk getting lost in a remote area. **There is no cell phone service in the mountains of this area.**
 - In addition, **it is not safe to drive in evening** in the mountains because of the danger of elk and deer that regularly cross the roads at that hour. Please take this advice seriously and arrange your schedule so that you arrive safely and on time.
- **Vehicle clearance:** The last seven miles into the retreat center are on unpaved Forest Road 91B. A 4WD with high clearance is ideal. However, in most situations, a 2WD regular clearance vehicle is adequate, unless the weather is very wet. Weather that is wet enough to make the roads very muddy is a rare occurrence: the roads are almost always passable in a normal, 2WD vehicle. However, if road conditions become unusually muddy or impassable for any reason, we will contact you before the retreat opening. Low clearance vehicles can and often travel into the ranch (i.e. Prius) but please understand that low clearance vehicles like this may scrape bottom from rocks or dried ruts.
- **Travel amenities:** If you are driving to the retreat center, please note that the last opportunities for fuel or lodging will be in Espanola or Taos, New Mexico or Alamosa, Colorado (depending on which route you take). There are no gas stations, lodging or other amenities in the town of Tres Piedras or between Tres Piedras and the retreat center.
- **Driving times:** 6 hours from Denver, 3 ½ hours from Albuquerque, 3 1/2 hours from Durango, 2 ½ hours from Santa Fe, 1 ½ hours from Taos. Driving times are estimated and include no stops.

Meals: Meals at the ranch are healthy, hearty, ovo-lacto vegetarian (incorporating eggs and dairy). We strive to use organic and locally sourced ingredients whenever possible. Tea, fruit and snacks are available throughout the day in the dining room. Coffee is served at breakfast. The retreat center is almost 2 hours from the nearest supermarket, and much effort is required to provide all of our guests with fresh, delicious home-cooked meals.

- At the time of orientation, the retreat manager or staff will provide a schedule with meal times.
- **Special Diet Requests:** Accommodating special diet requests means extra planning and work for staff and cooks and additional expense for special ingredients and products. If you do not



inform us of special diet needs in advance, we will not be able to accommodate them during the retreat. Please let us know on your registration form if you have special needs and we will do our best to accommodate you. We offer a simple bar for guests with dietary restrictions.

- **Bringing Your Own Food:** Fridge space at Vallecitos is extremely limited. Only retreatants who have a medical need for bringing and storing perishable food may do so with prior notice and approval by Vallecitos staff. Retreatants may be able to bring non-perishable food to store in the Vallecitos lodge. Please contact us by email if you have any questions or need to request permission to bring food.

Phone and Internet: At Vallecitos, we encourage you to unplug from the outside world. You will find your time in the mountains a rare and welcome respite from the demands of cell phone, email and other pressures of your life. As we are located in a remote area, cell phone service is not available.

A phone is available for emergencies only. There is no guest wi-fi at the retreat center.

Because of our limited solar capacity, electric outlets are not available to charge personal devices. Please bring a cell phone car charger or portable solar charger to ensure you are able to use your phone upon leaving the ranch. There are no electrical outlets for personal appliances or electronic devices in the Hermitage.

Emergency contact: If someone needs to reach you during the retreat, they should call our office 505-469-9017.

Work Meditation Jobs: "Work meditation" jobs are an opportunity to engage in the maintenance and care of each other and the retreat space. A rewarding and meaningful part of your experience at Vallecitos, work meditation jobs link us to our everyday life, both at Vallecitos and when we return home.

There is a short work period each day to help with the daily tasks of running the retreat center, including food preparation, washing dishes, and cleaning. You will be able to sign up for your job upon arrival. **Out of fairness for all retreat participants we will not take requests or make assignments for jobs prior to the start of your self-retreat.**

What to Bring: Our motto for clothing is "**Be Prepared!**" with the emphasis on comfort, not style. Nights and mornings during the summer can be chilly (40s-50s) while early and late summer can dip into the 30's. Days can be quite warm (70s-80s). Also, please remember that because of the high elevation of the ranch, the sun is very intense. **Sunscreen and a hat are a must!** Frequent and unexpected afternoon thunderstorms are also likely during the summer months. Packing rainproof or resistant footwear will ensure your comfort. For more information about average temperatures and weather during your retreat, please visit our [website](#).

Basic Packing List:

- Warm sleeping bag (**rated down to +10**) or sufficient blanket(s) for warmth
- Pillow case and bottom sheet for Queen bed
- Towel and wash cloth
- Clothes that can be layered



- Bathing suit (for the swimming pond in warmer months)
- Sun Hat (warm hat too in colder months)
- Rain gear (raincoat or poncho)
- Hiking boots or sturdy walking shoes (rain resistant is preferable)
- Daypack
- Battery operated travel alarm and/or watch
- Battery operated flashlight or headlamp (or two, it is nice to have an extra)
- Extra batteries
- Water bottle
- Toiletries (Fragrance Free shower products are available by donation. If bringing your own, please be sure its Fragrance Free.)
- Sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- Medications

Packing Tips (and items available at the retreat center):

- You may bring your own meditation supplies, if desired. The center does have zafus, zabutons, benches and chairs available. You are NOT required to bring you own supplies, but are welcome to if you would like.
- You may bring a yoga mat if desired. The center does have yoga mats available to borrow.
- Please note that we do not have the electrical capacity to support participants charging and using personal devices such as ipads or computers. You are encouraged to leave these items at home, or at least in your car.

Renting and purchasing equipment: To help you pack light, we offer the Ultimate Comfort Package – a sleeping bag, sleeping bag liner, sheet and pillowcase, towel and washcloth – for you to rent during your stay. Supplies are limited, so if you plan to rent the Ultimate Comfort Package, please note this on your registration form so that we may reserve your items. The cost of the Ultimate Comfort Package is \$50 and includes a cleaning fee.

We have various items available for purchase at the Ranch Store, including flashlights, batteries, sunscreen, shampoo, toothbrushes, travel alarm clocks, etc. A limited number of souvenir items are also available for purchase. The sale of these items helps support Vallecitos. Vallecitos accepts cash, credit card or personal check for Ranch Store purchases.

Luggage: In order to ensure a stress-free arrival, we will have volunteers and staff that will help you sign in, direct you to your accommodation and show you where to park your vehicle. Please help ensure a smooth start to your retreat by only bringing luggage that you can carry a short distance yourself.

Meditation props: We have meditation cushions (zafus and zabutons), meditation benches and chairs at the retreat center. If you have room in your luggage and would like to bring your preferred cushion, you are welcome to do so.

Lost and Found: If you leave an item(s) behind at the center when you depart, we will do our best to locate your item, transport it to our office in Durango and ship the item to you. The cost to return left item(s) to you is \$25 plus the cost of shipping materials and postage.



Health and Safety

We are a remote wilderness ranch and are prepared for minor injuries and illness only. The nearest hospital is approximately 1 ½ hour drive. It is your responsibility to notify us of any medical, physical or mental conditions and of any medications or treatments you are currently taking which may effect your stay at the hermitage. Please note that the high elevation may exacerbate certain medical conditions including, but not limited to, breathing problems, high blood pressure, heart conditions, and diabetes. **Please consult your physician before traveling to the retreat center.** Vallecitos Mountain Retreat Center is not responsible for injury or loss arising in connection with program participation.

Elevation: The elevation of the retreat center is 8,800 feet. Visitors to the center may experience mild symptoms of elevation related illness, including fatigue, headache, dizziness and nausea. **Hydration is key to reducing altitude related illness.** Usually, these mild symptoms disappear after a few days. It is critical to stay well hydrated prior to travel and during your retreat. However, please note that the high elevation may exacerbate certain medical conditions including, but not limited to, breathing problems, high blood pressure, heart conditions, and diabetes. **Please consult your physician before traveling to the retreat center.**

CPAP machines: We can accommodate CPAP machines. However, you will need to bring a "150 watt portable power inverter" which is an adapter that can connect your machine to a cigarette-lighter type connection. They are available for \$30-40 at stores like Target and Auto Zone. Please be sure your adapter works with your CPAP machine before travelling to the ranch. **We must receive advance notification via your registration form if you intend to use a CPAP machine on your retreat.**

Cancellations:

Please [contact us](#) immediately if you plan to cancel your retreat.

- 45 days prior to reservation: Full refund, minus a \$100 cancellation fee
- 44-15 days prior to reservation: Half refund
- 14 days or less prior to reservation: No refunds

All cancellations and refund requests must be emailed to refuge@vallecitos.org.

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