

# 2023 UUCSR Men's Weekend Retreat

## Attendee Information

Greetings Gentlemen,

You are welcome to attend the **2023 "9<sup>th</sup> Annual" UUCSR Men's Weekend Retreat**. We are looking forward to you joining all of us for a relaxing weekend of exploration, laughter, and fellowship with other men of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation Santa Rosa.

**Friday 4/7 – Sunday 4/9 2023**

**Black Mountain Retreat Center / Preserve / & 'Padmasambhava Peace Institute'.**

**23125 Fort Ross Rd, Cazadero CA 95421**

Phone: 707-632-5629 (9am – 8pm 7 days a week) / Text or voicemail: 707-847-6353

Upon arrival check in at the dining-hall, 2nd building on left as you drive in.

**Friday 3:30-5:30:** arrive, sign-in, unpack, & socialize / **6pm:** dinner & gathering circle

**Sunday After Lunch:** formal activities end / **Depart** no later than **3pm**

## What to do

- **What to Expect?** Please review the list of expectations for retreat attendees beginning on page #2.
  - Plan to arrive before 6pm dinner (allow 70-90 minutes travel time).
  - Print a map if desired for travel, there is no cell reception in areas, see Driving Directions Page #5
  - Review the weather forecast for appropriate clothing needed.
  - Read the attached liability release statement to be signed @ sign-in.
  - Take a tour of the venue online at <https://blackmountaincenter.com/about-us> / click on "take-a-tour"
- **What to Bring?** Please review detailed packing list on page #4.
  - Drumming circle drums etc., musical instruments, games, cards, etc. see page #4
  - An "alter item" see page #5.
  - A "gathering circle stone" (from past Men's Retreats if you have one) see page #5.
  - Social Hour supplies (e.g. snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, beer, wine) see page #4
- **Can't make it?** If your plans change and you won't be coming as planned, please contact Bruce Hope (707-775-7017) ASAP. We have contracted with Black Mountain Retreat Center for your attendance and meals, for which we may have to pay whether you attend or not. Please attempt to find an alternate to take your place if you can't make it. Requests for refunds will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## Questions?

Please look for the answer in the following information, visit the Black Mountain Retreat Center website (<https://blackmountaincenter.com>) as appropriate, then contact Bruce Hope (707-775-7017)

Page 2 Personal Expectations

Page 2 The New Venue: Black Mountain Retreat Center (<https://blackmountaincenter.com>)

Page 3 Communications while @ BMRC

Page 3 Sleeping Accommodations

Page 4 Sleeping Assignments

Page 4 Dining

Page 4 Packing lists

Page 5 About UUCSR's Weekend Retreats

Page 6 Driving directions

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

### **Personal Expectations –**

- Above all, it is expected that each of us personally contribute to a **safe** and **respectful** environment. **Trust** that personal sharing, especially in small groups, will remain private is essential.
- COVID protocols (see also page #3):
  - Masking is optional; please respect the choices of others.
  - Please do not attend if you have COVID.
  - If you feel sick, please test prior to attending and wear a mask.
  - Being current on your vaccinations lowers the risk for all.
- Participants are asked to be “present” in body and mind during the retreat. Please consider the following:
  - Give your mind time to clear, unwind, and transition into our time together. Try to arrive on Friday between 3:30pm and 5:30pm with time to check-in, unpack, and take a deep breath before dinner. If you can't arrive early, plan on a 6pm dinner immediately followed by our gathering activities.
  - If you consume alcohol, please do so in moderation on Friday and/or Saturday evenings.
  - Participate and share during group activities to the extent you are willing and able.
  - Give yourself as much downtime apart from group activities as you feel the need for.
  - Join in the small group meetings as much as possible, especially the Saturday evening gathering circle and Sunday morning closing circle.
  - Please participate in our “gathering circle stone” and “alter item” rituals.
  - You are invited to take a “digital Sabbath” from your electronic devices during this time.

### **The venue ... Black Mountain Retreat Center (BMRC)**

Located in the western Sonoma county coastal mountains, midway between Cazadero and the ocean, lies the 485 acre Black Mountain Retreat Center & Preserve consisting of a cluster of one-story buildings in the center of wooded valleys and open meadows, at around 1100 feet altitude. The buildings that now comprise Black Mountain Retreat Center (BMRC) were built in 1964 by the California Department of Forestry as part of their network of minimum-security inmate conservation camps. The ‘Black Mountain Conservation Camp’ closed in 1992 and then in early 2004 the BMRC’s parent organization Padmasambhava Peace Institute acquired the property. BMRC is an all-volunteer community in residence since early 2004, with staff of varied backgrounds and experience. “Our unifying purpose is a commitment to a spiritual path of

enquiry and formal practice, and our belief that serving others is an important part of spiritual practice. Working for our guests' happiness is something we enjoy and take pride in."

Take a photographic tour of the venue online at <https://blackmountaincenter.com> / about-us / click on "take-a-tour"

- **No Smoking.** BMRC is a 100% non-smoking retreat center, tobacco, marijuana products, and recreational drugs of any kind are not allowed. Smokers can drive five minutes up onto the main road to smoke, but are requested to dispose of matches and cigarette butts in the car ashtray or a safe container in the car.
- **Candles,** incense or fires of any kind are not allowed anywhere on the property or in the buildings without explicit permission of staff.
- The **meditation-room** at Black Mountain Retreat Center is central to the residential community's life here. Guests are most welcome to visit our meditation room while BMRC residents are using it and to sit for some or all of the group practice: Friday & Saturday 7-8am and 6-7pm, and Sunday 9.30am-noon.
- As a wildlife preserve, we regret that we are unable to host **pets**.
- Please do not leave **food items** in your car, sleeping area, or meeting rooms.
- Personal snacks and beverages need to be kept in sealed and labeled containers in the dining-hall kitchen refrigerator.
- EV Electric Vehicle charging is available on-site (user fee applies)
- BMRC's eco-friendly efforts include implementing a 'green cleaning' products policy.
- BMRC is a fully COVID vaccinated community and follows masking/distancing protocols while COVID remains an issue.

## **Communications While at Black Mountain Retreat Center**

- There are no phones in the bedroom areas and meeting rooms.
- There maybe **no cell-phone** reception at BMRC — be prepared to drive 5 minutes to get reception, or bring a **phone-card to use on the land line**.
- Give friends/family our business number 707-632-5629 for **emergencies** or short contact purposes.
- **Wireless internet access** is available without charge, and we have high-speed internet. However, guests need to be mindful of the satellite internet bandwidth limitations and not stream, download, or upload, large files of any kind.

## **BMRC Sleeping Accommodations –**

The majority of lodging at BMRC is located in the “**Manzanita House**” where most beds are in 12-person to 17-person dormitory style settings (no bunk beds). These are the “standard beds” at the full dormitory registration fee of \$160. The “**Tara House**” also has 11 beds available in single and double-occupancy rooms and 1 bed with a private bath. The registration fee for these rooms is from \$220 to \$390 per bed. For more detailed descriptions of the retreat center accommodations visit <https://blackmountaincenter.com>. All beds have shared hallway bathrooms, electrical outlets (e.g. for CPAP machines), and are provided with bed linens, blankets, & a towel.

## **BMRC Sleeping Location Assignments –**

The standard dormitory beds located in the “**Manzanita House**” will be first-come, first-claimed when you arrive at BMRC. The 11 “**Tara House**” beds are available first-come, first-served during registration only. The single and double-occupancy rooms in “**Tara House**” must be signed up in advance with additional payment.

## **Dining @ BMRC Meals –**

BMRC serves delicious, healthy, vegetarian meals drawing on Mediterranean, Mexican, Italian, Chinese, Thai and Indian culinary traditions, cooked from scratch. Fruit, bread, peanut butter & jam are set out in the dining room on arrival, departure, and after dinner. For beverages, we serve teas and coffee with dairy or soy milk, and organic agave nectar or sugar.

At the time of registration please **fully describe any special dietary needs**. In addition to the “standard” lacto-ovo vegetarian meals, Gluten-free and vegan options are available upon advance request. Other than this, BMRC cannot cater to diets based on personal preferences, only those based on allergies or medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, celiac disease, etc.). Those who follow restricted diets for other reasons; they may need to bring their own supplementary food items. Limited refrigerator and microwave are available for guests.

BMRC is unable to accommodate people with life-threatening allergies to peanuts or tree nuts or those with nightshade allergies.

## **Packing Lists:**

- You will be provided with six meals, bed linens, blankets, & a towel.
- Items to bring:
  - Flashlight (or headlamp) for walking between buildings after dark.
  - Personal items (ear plugs, medications, CPAP & medical devices)
  - Toiletries, shower soap, etc.
  - Weather and walking appropriate clothing and shoes.
  - Social hour contributions: appetizers, snack food, non-alcoholic beverages, beer and wine in moderation to share for our Friday & Saturday evening gatherings.
- Items to consider:
  - Slippers or heavy socks for indoors
  - A “**gathering circle stone**” from a previous year (if you have one).
  - An object for our “**alter table**” to honor an important man in your life that you would like to share during the weekend.
  - Readings, poems, or other (brief) contribution to the Sunday service.
  - Camera
  - Special food items (especially if you listed special diet other than vegetarian)
  - Drums, musical instruments, games, poems, readings, juggling, talent (or lack thereof) items etc. that you would like to share.

- Games, puzzles, cards, etc.
- Night-comfort items for our shared sleeping spaces: reading light, earplugs, etc.

## **About Our UUCSR Men’s Weekend Retreats**

In 2009 Andy Lavine attended a UU regional men’s retreat and brought the idea home by coordinating the first ever (?) men’s weekend retreat for UUCSR. From 2009 through 2016 we held annual two-night retreats each year in the Fall at Saint Dorothy’s Rest. The 9<sup>th</sup> retreat was scheduled for October 2017 but was cancelled due to the Tubbs Fire, followed by the pandemic restrictions. The 9<sup>th</sup> retreat has been resurrected for 2023 at a new venue and with enough volunteers for the retreat planning committee in the future this will hopefully be a continuation of UUCSRs *annual* weekend retreats. These are relaxed, informal, and enjoyable gatherings where men of the congregation and their friends can deepen relationships, make new friends, and explore issues common to men. All UUCSR members & friends, and friends of UUCSR men are welcome. No experience is necessary. For many men, these gatherings are the first time they have ever attended a “men’s retreat.” One does not need to be in a men’s group to attend a retreat. Come enjoy the fellowship of men eating, relaxing, exploring, playing, and enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

Two of our ongoing rituals have been to:

- Bring an “**Altar**” item.
  - As in past years we will have an Altar space to honor or remember, a man or men important in our lives. You are encouraged bring a photo or object related to a male mentor, friend, absent man, or relative to place on the altar table in a central location. You will have an opportunity during gathering circles to share a snippet about your altar item with the group if you wish to.
- Bring your “**gathering circle stone**” from a previous retreat if you have one, if not, you will receive one at the gathering circle.
  - This is for our Stone/water Ritual: As we enter the sacred space we create for the retreat, each man will receive a stone or bring one from a previous retreat. As we hold the stones during the opening circle, they are transformed into expressions of the holder's unique identity. At the time of the ritual, there will be a bowl of water in the center of the circle, and each of us will rise and place his stone in the water with a short statement of his presence. As the stones fill the bowl and are covered in the water, they will symbolize our submersion in the space of our time together. The stone filled bowl reminds us of the web of relationships we create during the retreat and helps to deepen our sense of respect and compassion for each other. At the closing circle, we will reverse the process. Each man will rise and take a stone from the bowl, again with a short statement of presence. Because it will most likely be another man's stone, each will carry that stone's uniqueness with him out into the wider world as a reminder of what we have created together.

## **Driving Directions** (NOTE: the nearest **gasoline** is located in Guerneville or Jenner)

- Directions from Santa Rosa, ***Inland route*** (along rivers, through Cazadero...)
- Drive from Santa Rosa to **Guerneville**, on River Road, and continue through Guerneville (last stop for gas stations) and Monte Rio. The road becomes Hwy 116 West.
- About 20 minutes out of Guerneville, you will cross a bridge with a **sign on the right for ‘Cazadero’**.
- Turn right on **Cazadero Highway** and continue 6 miles to the town of Cazadero.
- Just past Cazadero is a STOP sign and the road forks uphill to the **left onto Fort Ross Road**.
- Continue for **6 miles** on Fort Ross Road till you reach a large white house on the left (there are almost no houses on this road, so this is easy to spot!)
- A few minutes later you pass the junction with Brain Ridge Road, and then reach our driveway on the left. Guardrails and large metal sign will be on the left.
- Take that sharp left onto our two-laned driveway and continue down 2 miles till you reach a cluster of buildings, and a STOP sign on a side wall. Our office is on the near end of the building on your right.
- Upon arrival **check in** at the dining-hall, 2nd building on left as you drive in.

### Directions from Santa Rosa ***Coastal Route*** (past rivers and vineyards, up the coast...)

- Drive from Santa Rosa through **Guerneville** to Jenner on Hwy 116. (Do NOT turn right onto Cazadero Highway).
- Continue straight on 116, passing through Duncan’s Mill on the way, till 116 ends at Hwy 1.
- Swing right on Hwy 1. Drive north through **Jenner** (last stop for gas station, on right)
- Turn right onto **Meyers Grade Road** and continue for 4 miles. Watch for a **sign on right saying ‘Cazadero’**.
- Take the next sharp right onto **Fort Ross Road**.
- After about 4 miles when you reach a hill-top clearing, take a right on our two-laned driveway. A large metal sign says ‘Padmasambhava Peace Institute / Black Mountain Preserve’.
- Continue down 2 miles till you reach a cluster of buildings, and a STOP sign on a side wall. Our office is on the far end of the building on your right.
- Upon arrival **check in** at the dining-hall, 2nd building on left as you drive in.