

Checklist for pilgrims

by [Debra Bendis](#) in the [March 22, 2000](#) issue

A Place for God: A Guide to Spiritual Retreats and Retreat Centers, by Timothy Jones

For Christians seeking time for spiritual renewal away from their ordinary routines, Timothy Jones offers a wise and comprehensive guide to over 250 retreat centers across the U.S. and Canada, organized by state. The majority of the sites are Catholic, but Episcopal, Quaker and Mennonite places are also represented. Jones describes landscape features as well as the history and purpose of each center. He tells us, for example, that Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minnesota, is built on a site once called "a sheltered, quiet place" by Native Americans, and that its primarily ministry is providing silent, meditative retreats. Kanuga, on the other hand, is an Episcopal center in North Carolina that accommodates hundreds at its summer conferences.

Each entry includes charges or suggested donations for rooms per night, the cost and availability of meals, the availability of handicapped facilities, and directions to the center. Jones even includes a glossary, so that the reader is not deterred by terms like "spiritual director," "friary" and "oratory."

If you are already familiar with retreat centers, this book will expand your list of destinations. If you have never ventured out to an abbey or spiritual center, Jones's help may be even more valuable. He shares his own retreat experiences and recalls and addresses each hesitation that once kept him from experiences that now "pervade and transform" his daily life. His arguments for going on retreat are encouraging and inspiring.

He also answers practical questions. What should I take along to a retreat center? What will I do there? What's expected of me? Jones helps beginners plan their first retreats, outlining a simple starter getaway that is spent walking, resting and praying, and a more planned retreat that takes advantage of on-site spiritual directors for guided prayer and reflection.