

Preparing for a Retreat at The Garrison Institute

We have prepared this information to help you plan for a successful retreat at the Garrison Institute. We look forward to welcoming you in the near future. More specific information on our policies will be given to you on your arrival here.

FACILITIES

The home of the Garrison Institute is a former Capuchin Franciscan monastery of 77,000 square feet that was restored and renovated in 2002. Originally built in 1932, it overlooks the Hudson River just over an hour north of New York City.

The Institute offers many communal spaces: a large, beautifully lit meditation hall (the former chapel); a meditation annex (for smaller groups or individual practices); a dining hall seating up to 200 for buffet-style meals; a lower level auditorium; and three classrooms for break-out space, lectures or discussions.

FOOD

We serve a variety of healthy and tasty homemade food. If you have special dietary needs, we encourage you to bring any supplemental items you may need. We have a refrigerator and storage space, along with a microwave oven and toaster that you may use in the service kitchen located at the end of the dining hall. Non-gluten options are available at every meal and ingredients are listed at the serving tables. Meat is available for an additional charge.

No food is permitted in the bedrooms. There are water, tea and coffee stations in the dining room and the lounges on the second and third floors; most are available 24 hours a day. Drinks may be brought to bedrooms, but cups and glasses should be returned to the service kitchen after use. We have a small housekeeping staff, so your assistance is most appreciated. No food is permitted in the meditation hall, and only drinks with lids are allowed.

BEDROOMS

With a total of 90 bedrooms accommodating 165 people, we provide single and double rooms, and a limited number of triples and quads. All rooms are located on the second, third or fourth floors. On our ground floor are two handicapped-accessible bedrooms that share a bath. All rooms have windows, and many face out toward the Hudson River. The bedrooms are not air-conditioned but high ceilings, thick masonry walls, tall windows, and transoms ensure comfortable temperatures. Fourth floor bedrooms have ceiling fans. All rooms are provided with sheets, a pillow, blanket, bedspread and bath towel for each guest.

There are towel bars located inside the closet doors—please refrain from hanging towels on the radiators. You may bring anything else you need for your comfort.

BATHROOMS

There are two communal bathrooms (one male, one female) on each floor with Zen-inspired modern finishes including bamboo window shades, slate countertops, the form of the Hudson River sculpted elegantly into the floor tiles, and rustic wood accents in the showers. A women's sauna (on the second floor) and men's sauna (on the third floor) are available for your enjoyment.

LOUNGES

There are three lounges in the building on the second, third and fourth floors. Those on the second and third floors provide tea, water and instant coffee 24 hours a day. We also offer a high-speed internet connection for computer users. Please note: you must bring your own computer/laptop and be able to configure it to work on a DHCP network. There is a computer for your use in the second floor lounge.

GROUNDS

We encourage you to enjoy our beautiful outdoor environment. We have a large walled rear yard containing gardens and a labyrinth. In the front of the Institute is a meadow with benches and a gazebo overlooking the Hudson River. There are trails through the woods that adjoin our property, and a short hike connects up to the Appalachian Trail.

POLICIES

SILENCE

The Garrison Institute seeks to be a place of refuge, reflection, and peace. Each group at the Garrison Institute will have its own discipline, which will include varying levels of silence. Whatever the practice of your group, we ask that guests be respectful of the contemplative atmosphere of the Institute and any other groups that may be present. Please do not bring or use portable radios, CD or tape players without earphones, and be mindful of cell phone use and the potential for disturbing others.

COMMUNICATION

There are no phones in guest bedrooms. You can give out our main telephone number to those who may need to reach you: 845-424-4800. If you get a non-emergency phone call, we will post the message on the guest message board. If you get an emergency message, we will find you and deliver it promptly. To make a phone call, there is a pay phone on the first floor. Please bring your own coins for making calls. Cell phone service is somewhat erratic in our building, but usually works outside.

SMOKING

There is a designated smoking area outside the building behind the garage next to the loading dock. No smoking is permitted in the building (mandated by NYS law) or anywhere outside other than in the designated area.

DRESS

Dress at the Garrison Institute is relaxed and informal. Guests should bring clothes and shoes that are comfortable and modest. Shorts and tee shirts are fine. Be sure to bring clothes that are appropriate for hiking so you can enjoy the trails.

PETS

In the tradition of the Franciscans who lived here, we love animals. However, we cannot accommodate pets other than certified companion dogs. Please notify the Institute before you arrive, so we can accommodate you.

FRAGRANCE

For the sake of those who are highly sensitive to fragrance, please do not use any perfume or cologne, and please use only unscented, fragrance-free personal hygiene products. (Note that many products labeled “natural” or “organic” do not contain fragrance.)

MAIL SERVICES

Mail (through US Postal Service) is picked up/dropped off once a day from the Garrison Institute. We do not have postage stamps or “metered stamps” available for sale, so please plan accordingly. We do have UPS pick-up service (and delivery) once a day—you will need to use your own UPS account number or a credit card to use this service as well as your own mailing envelope. An outgoing mail basket is located in our front lobby for all guests.

CANCELLATIONS

There is a cancellation policy that applies to a group canceling a whole retreat/program at the Garrison Institute. This policy is stated in the contract that is established with each retreat group.

For individuals cancelling their attendance at a retreat when Garrison Institute collects room and board fees directly from guests, we assess a \$50 cancellation fee up to a week in advance of a retreat. For cancellations within a week of the event, in addition to the \$50 cancellation fee, we will assess a fee of \$40 per day for the length of the retreat to cover our direct costs for food, which will have already been ordered.

If you cancel after 4pm the night before a retreat starts, there will be no refund. It is in your best interest to be certain of your intention before registering for a program. Thank you.

HOUSE JOBS

If your retreat or group includes this option, we offer a small discount to any guest who agrees to help us maintain the facility and serve the group while here. Jobs normally take about one hour per day and are done as needed during breaks in the program schedule. None of the jobs involves heavy manual labor or requires special skill. Examples are dish washing, bathroom tidying and stocking, and general cleaning of common rooms. In the warmer months, we often need help with weeding and outside work. For large retreats we sometimes offer a work scholarship, which involves a deep discount for three hours a day of work. This can be discussed with our registrar.

registrar@garrisoninstitute.org

CHECK-IN

Retreats usually begin with registration on opening day from 3pm to 6pm. We ask that guests arrive between those times to check in, get their room and job assignments (if applicable), and get oriented. Dinner is from 6pm to 7pm. NOTE: There are no locks on the bedroom doors at the Garrison Institute, so plan accordingly in terms of bringing valuable items with you.

CHECK-OUT

Retreats generally end by noon on closing day and usually include breakfast and lunch. We ask that guests check out of their rooms by 2pm. Any unclaimed personal belongings left at the Garrison Institute by guests will be held in our Lost and Found. Please call within a week's time to let us know you've lost a personal belonging. If we haven't heard from any guests within a week to claim a lost item, that item will be donated to charity.

FOOD SENSITIVITY INFORMATION

The Garrison Institute serves vegetarian meals through our in-house caterer, Fresh Company. As much as possible, we select local and organic foods that provide a well-rounded and nutritious meal. Lunch and dinner have a main entrée, two side dishes and salad greens. Each dish on the buffet table has a card, which lists all ingredients in that dish. Many meals have dairy, wheat and/or gluten. Non-gluten options are available. Meat is available for an extra fee.

Because we are a retreat center, we are set up to provide meals to groups, not to individuals. Menus are based on what is in season and in the market. Because of this, we are not able to accommodate individual needs. But, because there are many people with food restrictions, we try to offer a simple substitute during lunch and dinner meals. This substitute includes rice, gluten-free bread, rice cakes, an unseasoned vegetable, and hard-boiled eggs. These extra items will be in the small kitchen just behind the dining hall.

We invite guests to bring what they think they will need to supplement their diet. We offer a refrigerator and shelf space for storage. We also have a microwave and toaster for guests to heat food. We do not have a stove or blender for guests.

Even on a limited diet, most people find they can eat much of what is offered on the buffet, supplemented with what individuals bring. At lunch and dinner meals, a retreatant can go through the buffet taking whatever works for them, then go into the nearby kitchen to supplement the meal with plain rice, a vegetable, eggs, or other foods that one has purchased. Please identify yourself to a staff person the first night at dinner and he/she will show you where the extra food is available. At the end of the meals (after everyone has been served), a retreatant can go back through the line and take more of whatever agrees with them to add to the next meal.

If a retreatant has a severe allergy, please let Garrison staff know before the retreat so the kitchen can make plans. Also, make sure to bring your EpiPen or an equivalent medicine. All food ingredients will be listed at meals. The kitchen asks us to let anyone with allergies know that they cannot guarantee that certain foods have not been contaminated before arriving on site.

CHECKLIST FOR GUESTS

We encourage guests to bring:

- Comfortable shoes and clothing—for sitting, walking, hiking, etc.
- Bathrobe and slippers—for use in our communal bathrooms, hallways and saunas.
- Extra towels—we provide one bath towel per guest
- Shawl or blanket—for use during meditation or evening walks
- An alarm clock—we cannot provide a “wake-up call”
- Personal fan—we do not have air conditioning.
Evenings are usually quite pleasant with river breezes.
- Lightweight luggage—all bedrooms are accessible via stairs to upper floors.

We must ask guests not to bring:

- Candles or incense to burn
- Scented products
- Drugs or alcohol
- Pets—unless certified companion dog