


A scenic landscape at sunset. In the foreground, a person sits on a wooden bench, looking out over a grassy hill. Several other people are sitting on the grass, some on a circular stone platform. A large tree with a swing hangs over the scene. The sun is setting behind mountains in the distance, creating a warm, golden glow.

A Comprehensive Guide to Choosing a Psychedelic Retreat



Most people who attend
psychedelic retreats
are seeking some
combination of:

01 Increasing self-understanding,
self-awareness, self-worth

02 Overcoming limiting
beliefs

03 Finding deeper meaning
and purpose in life

04 Navigating life
transitions

05 Promoting habit
change

06 Improving relationships,
connectedness, belonging

07 Exploring spirituality and
mysticism

08 Cultivating emotional growth
and resolving old wounds

09 Building self-regulation and
resilience

10 Improving overall sense of
wellbeing

A Comprehensive Guide to Choosing a Psychedelic Retreat

Psychedelic retreats can offer profound and transformative experiences. Whether you're looking to grow and improve your wellbeing, seeking spiritual insights, or following your curiosity or intrigue around expanded states of consciousness, selecting the right retreat is crucial for a safe and meaningful experience. This guide provides you with essential considerations when exploring your options.



Look Inward and Start
with Your Own “Why?”

Before selecting a psychedelic retreat, sit in a process of inner inquiry. Carve out some private time to reflect and journal.

What brought you to seek a psychedelic experience?

What are you hoping to achieve? What type of experience do you envision for yourself?

What is most important to you in finding the right retreat provider?

Safety, ethics, legality, personal support, location, community, cohort size, value for cost?


Deepening in your own self-understanding can help guide you in selecting a retreat experience that is best aligned with your intentions, priorities and values.



The process of inner inquiry may also involve discussing your intentions and plans with an open-minded, trusted loved one. Feeling well supported throughout the decision-making process can make a difference. It's also worth seeking advice from your physician and/or healthcare support team, who can provide guidance on risks, contraindications, medication management, etc.

Once you've reflected, consulted with trusted allies, and done your research, remember to follow your gut instincts.

visit www.beckleyretreats.com



Know Your Options: The 'What' and 'How' of Working with Psychedelics



Types of Psychedelics and Their Comparative Risks

There are different types of psychedelics that may be offered on retreats, including psilocybin (mushrooms), ayahuasca, ibogaine, and others (including MDMA, a stimulant/hallucinogen/empathogen). Additionally, in recent years, ketamine (a dissociative anesthetic) has also begun to be offered in clinical (and some retreat) settings. Each of these substances impacts consciousness in different ways and comes with its own risks, benefits, and distinct type of expanded state experience. We recommend looking into those that appeal to you in order to better understand the effects, risk profile, contraindications, and pros and cons of each substance.

Retreats Settings vs Clinical Settings

Psychedelic retreats and clinics both offer unique experiences for individuals seeking the benefits associated with working with psychedelics. Clinics and retreats vary in the substances used, the setting and duration, and the type of support provided. The choice between a retreat setting and a clinical setting depends on individual preferences, intentions, access, and therapeutic needs. Retreat settings may be best for those looking to carve out time away from day-to-day life for non-clinical self-inquiry, self-care, and deep personal work in a beautiful setting and in the safety of community and a qualified facilitation team.



Retreats Settings vs. Clinical Settings



Retreats

Typically ceremonial / non-clinical or clinically-informed

3-10+ day immersive experience on site in natural setting, with preparation and integration support before and after

1-5+ doses per retreat, depending on substance and retreat duration

Psilocybin, ayahuasca, ibogaine, cannabis, ketamine, MDMA, others

Community experience in cohorts of 6 to 50+ (group and 1:1 support from facilitation team)

Support emotional, psychological, and spiritual growth and transformation

Preparation and integration support vary by retreat provider



Clinics

Clinical

Several hours in clinical office setting (one or more sessions with various degrees of support in between)

1 dose per session

Typically ketamine or ibogaine

Typically solo experience (1:1 support from a clinician)

Treat diagnosed mental health issues

Preparation and integration support vary by provider



Retreat Design

Psychedelic retreats should be very intentionally designed.
Think about the following design elements and what is most important to you:

Ethos: namely, around shamanic ceremonial approaches from global wisdom traditions, or modern clinical approaches, or both/hybrid ◆

Duration and Doses: how long is the retreat and how many psychedelic doses will you receive (and how are the doses calculated?) ◆

Cohort Size: retreat cohorts can range from just a few people to 50-60 or more. A group size of 12-20 can provide intimacy and community-building. ◆

Activities: what kinds of activities are included in the retreat schedule? A range of mind/body/spirit wellbeing activities including meditation, mindful movement, breathwork and a variety of integration practices is recommended. Also consider, if important to you, if services like bodywork/massage are offered. ◆

Logistics and Accommodations: how far from the airport is the retreat site? Is airport transport provided? What are the accommodations like? What dietary restrictions are supported? How will special needs be met? What types of experiences will you have access to? Will you be able to wander/walk? ◆

Consider Location and Legality

The legal framework surrounding the use of psychedelic substances varies by country. In some countries, such as the Netherlands and Jamaica, certain psychedelics such as psilocybin truffles or mushrooms are legal, and retreats offering these substances operate openly within this legal framework. Retreats still operate in locations where psychedelics are illegal; depending on your priorities, selecting a retreat that operates in a legal setting may be a crucial component in ensuring that you feel psychologically and physically safe and in the hands of a reputable and responsible provider.

Look for Comprehensive Safety Measures

Psychedelic experiences, when approached with intention and care, can offer profound benefits. However, they also can carry risks, including the potential for challenging or overwhelming experiences, psychological distress, and adverse reactions under certain circumstances. The importance of thorough screening, set and setting, proper preparation and integration, and comprehensive safety protocols are vital to mitigating these risks.

Comprehensive screening and informed consent procedures

While most psychedelics (especially psilocybin) are generally very safe with few major side effects, experiences are variable and there are psychiatric conditions, physical conditions, medical issues, medications, treatments, and other conditions that would preclude safe participation in a psychedelic retreat.

Psychedelic retreat providers should have a comprehensive application process to screen in/out individuals for safety – as well as clear informed consent to communicate potential risks and side effects upon registration.

Preparation and integration

Research shows that proper preparation (before a psychedelic retreat) and integration (after a retreat) impact outcomes. Look for a retreat provider that offers a comprehensive, science-backed programmatic experience that tends holistically to physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual preparation and integration with community and private support options.

Preparation programs should be designed to build rapport and trust amongst cohort members and facilitators, as well as setting expectations and preparing participants for navigating psychedelic experiences. Integration programs should meet participants where they are and assist them not only in making meaning from the experience but implementing sustainable behavioral shifts that maximize learnings from the retreat for positive change.



Intentional set and setting

Set and setting – mindset (mental state leading up to and during a psychedelic experience) and physical environment (setting of the psychedelic experience) – play a significant role in outcomes.

In guided psychedelic experiences on retreats, there's potentially greater control over the set and setting compared with some other uses, which could increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Look for programs that emphasize mindset preparation and offer retreats in beautiful natural settings, which can serve as ideal places to relax, connect with nature and engage in introspection.



Trauma-informed approaches

While most psychedelic retreat providers are not operating within a clinical model (and may screen out participants with active trauma or severe PTSD), psychedelic experiences can unearth or activate past traumas. A qualified psychedelic retreat team will offer trauma-informed approaches to facilitating meditation, mindful movement, and psychedelic journeys.

On-site safety protocols

Look for evidence of comprehensive on-site preventative and responsive safety protocols including access to medical care; compound preparation and dosing procedures; guidelines for participant behavior; and a code of ethics/conduct for facilitators.

Clear communication channels, reporting and feedback

Look for retreat companies that have structures in place for participants to: report harm, adverse reactions, and challenging experiences; seek and receive personal support as needed; offer feedback; and engage in dialogue.

Think about Brand Reputation & Commitment to Ethics

Consider how important it is to you to work with an established and reputable brand with positive testimonials and participant reviews, operating with integrity and a clear commitment to ethical practice including reciprocity, sustainability and honoring of global wisdom traditions. Check retreat providers' websites and social media posts to determine if you feel aligned to their ethos and practices. Read about the company's senior staff and retreat facilitators to see if they are committed to serving others and committed to continuing their own inner work. It's a good sign if a retreat organization is affiliated with research organizations or NGOs, or if they cite research in their literature or websites. Retreat companies that cite (or participate in) research and use evidence-based practices are likely guided by the latest scientific insights and the growing body of knowledge in the field of psychedelic use.

Know Who You Will Be With and Whose Care You Will Be In

Look into retreat facilitation teams and how they operate:

- Credentialed, well-educated, seasoned facilitators with formal training in psychedelic facilitation and integration
- Diverse teams with a range of experience (from ceremonial practices from wisdom traditions and holistic wellness modalities to psychotherapeutic and clinical approaches) – and including access to medical personnel
- Low facilitator to guest ratio (1 facilitator for every 3-4 participants)
- Opportunities for participants to seek 1:1 support with facilitators before, during, and after retreat
- A formal code of ethics for facilitators with accountability and mechanisms for reporting harm
- A facilitation ethos of supportive care and support rather than “healing” with clear demonstration of understanding of power dynamics and healthy relationship and boundaries between facilitators and participants



Value for Cost

Psychedelic retreats range in price depending on many factors including retreat location, duration, quality of accommodations and cuisine, facilitator-to-participant ratio, inclusion of local transportation, services/activities, and comprehensiveness of preparation and integration programming (content and experience). That said, retreat participants often report that the life-changing outcomes they experience far outweigh the cost of their program. Look for retreat providers that are committed to increasing access through financial aid for those in need. All of these factors are critical in determining which retreat experience is right for you, the type of preparatory and integration experience you are seeking, what kind of travel experience is best for you, and your intentions for your retreat and the personal transformation and wellbeing you seek.



The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered “Man! Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived.”

visit beckleyretreats.com

As Featured In

Condé Nast
Traveler

FINANCIAL TIMES

VOGUE

**BUSINESS
INSIDER**

The
Economist

Forbes

Handelsblatt



THE  TIMES

The
Standard 