

Spring Break, Executive Edition

From fishing trips to corporate “Olympics,” there’s a new version of the annual retreat.

BY RENEE MORAD

The thought of spring break might bring on flashbacks of dirty hotel rooms, cramped car rides, and questionable decisions (no one ever needs a fifth burrito). But these days, spring breaks have a whole new meaning in the corporate world. Companies are increasingly working with event planners to organize springtime executive retreats that include team-building exercises, cultural activities, and a healthy dose of R&R in hopes to encourage teamwork, spark creativity, and avoid employee burnout back at the office.

Paddles Up



Throwing executives onto paddle boards in the middle of the ocean will certainly test their agility. Executive retreat-planning firm Event Solutions hosted a stand-up paddle challenge for Nike leaders last spring in Long Beach, California. Employees were divided into teams of six for a relay race, followed by a volleyball tournament.

Fishing for Ideas



Darby, Montana, is realistically the middle of nowhere; the closest city, Spokane, Washington, is more than 200 miles away. But thanks to being on the Bitterroot Range of the Rocky Mountains, it’s become a place for executives who want to bond over mountain biking, cattle driving, fly fishing, or a variety of other ranch-style activities. Triple

Creek Ranch sits on 600 acres and often has all 25 of its cabins rented out for corporate retreats.

Car Talk



The Highway 39 Event Center in Anaheim, California, features a collection of 50 museum-quality automobiles. For a corporate team-building event last year, the center created a 1950s auto garage



Illustration by
Peter Horvath

party, featuring noted automobile enthusiast and former talk show host Jay Leno.

Farm to (Boardroom) Table



The “Ready, Steady, Cook” challenge at Fearrington House Inn in Pittsboro, North Carolina, challenges executives to create a meal using limited resources and a secret ingredient within a specified time limit. Chefs judge the teams on ingredients, presentation, taste, and teamwork. There are also cooking classes, region-specific wine seminars, painting, and yoga.

Wine Down



From wine tasting with a sommelier to a biking tour and hot-air balloon

ride, Backroads’ private corporate retreats in California’s Napa and Sonoma valleys range from two to five nights, on average. Employees stay at nearby hotels such as the luxurious Solage in Calistoga or the sophisticated Hotel Healdsburg in Healdsburg. Sometimes, motivational speakers are called in to provide an added level of inspiration.

Company Olympics



Kingsmill Resort in Williamsburg, Virginia, can put together an Olympics-themed corporate retreat that includes a putting contest or a seaside challenge, complete with kayaking and beach cornhole. Looking to get even more creative? There’s the “amoeba creep relay.” ▀