



## Quilting with Friends is the Best!

Timeless Stitches — Quilt Capital of Kansas

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While many hobbies can be more solitary, quilting actually lends itself well to being a community activity. Whether it's quilting once a week as a group such as the Quilt Capital of Kansas Open Textile Studio on Wednesdays or going quarterly or even annually to larger quilting retreats, sharing that time with friends is beneficial to all who take part.

My first couple years of quilting were spent with a good friend going to weekly classes at the local adult education center in my hometown in Pittsburg, California. I reconnected with friends from my past, as well as made new friends who I'm still in touch with. Although we no longer quilt together in person, we do still share quilting projects and ongoing friendships online.

Back in 2014, not long after I returned to Kansas from my stint as caregiver to my aging parents in California, I rediscovered a friend from high school on Facebook who was living in Oklahoma and had also taken up quilting. She was the organizer of a quilt retreat of about 30 women for her guild and she invited me to join them. It was the first time I'd seen Linda since graduation way back in 1972, as well as my first experience attending a stay-in quilt retreat. The retreat was held at a state campground that had a central building where we quilted and ate, a shower/restroom building, and several basic bunk houses. The camaraderie among the guild members and their immediate acceptance of me into their circle was amazing. Although it wasn't a stretch to say we were camping with a roof over our heads, it was still such fun that I couldn't wait to go back.



Needless to say, I was hooked on attending quilt retreats from my first one and have sought out others ever since. I continued to retreat in Oklahoma for several years until Covid hit. Then it was all about staying home and staying safe. The last couple of years I've found new retreats closer to home that have been such fun.

Many people ask me, "Do you go with a friend or are retreats fun if you don't know anyone?" or "What should I take to a retreat?" My answer to the first question is sometimes with a friend and always fun with new friends! Any opportunity to meet new quilters and expand your quilting circle with new friends is a bonus. As to the second question, it depends on the retreat and what you plan to do there.

Other than your sewing machine (be sure to include your power cord and foot pedal!), necessary notions, and at least 2 projects to work on (you might finish one or get bored and want to switch projects), there are other things I would definitely add to the list. Check your project boxes/bags to be sure you have all fabric, marking tools and rulers, matching or neutral thread, pattern, and anything else you can think of. Many quilters pre-cut

projects to take to retreat so they can just sew. If you have a portable design wall, take it along. I've also come to realize that I do much better work when I'm comfortable, so taking my own chair is a necessity. Unless you know the retreat center has good quilting chairs, find a way to fit yours in.

Take slippers or socks to keep your feet warm if you're a "barefoot quilter" like me. Also take a sweatshirt so you can layer up if the temp in the retreat center fluctuates. Lord knows if you get a room full of quilters, many of whom are approaching menopause age or beyond, you rarely get the temperature just right as some will be too warm and some too cold. There's usually a community snack table where you can bring a favorite to share. For overnight retreats, I've even thrown in a foam egg-crate topper to roll out in case the bed is too hard, plus my own quilt and pillow.

Think of the things you enjoy having at hand when you're quilting and plan to include as much as you feel necessary to make the time spent sewing away from home enjoyable. One huge benefit of retreats is, if you do forget something, it's likely that someone else in attendance has just what you need and is willing to share.

Don't be afraid to sign up for a retreat—either day or stay-in, whether you know someone or not, because you're sure to have loads of fun and expand your circle of quilting friends. With new retreat centers and day-retreat opportunities popping up across the country, you're sure to find a fun place to stitch with friends.