



Stories and Songs Writing Retreat 2025

Montana/ Yellowstone

At Chico Hot Springs in Pray, Montana

Updated 11 August 2025

Please note: The schedule is subject to change as we accommodate the creative needs of the group. Locations are subject to change but will be announced!

Monday, Sept. 22

<p>4 p.m. <i>Chico Hot Springs</i></p>	<p>Check in at Chico Hot Springs</p>
<p>6 p.m. <i>Lower Lodge Two-Bedroom Suite</i></p>	<p>Welcome to the Stories and Songs Writing Retreat Happy hour</p> <p>WHY STORIES, WHY SONGS [Karen, Clay, Carolyn] Unleashing your creative soul / Songs and stories are born here Ways to find the synergies between stories and songs / How to make them tools for your toolbox How to design your writing immersion time</p>
<p>7:30 p.m. <i>Historic Dining Room</i></p>	<p>DINNER TOGETHER (Make reservations in advance for dining room) [3 tables, choose your host: Karen, Clay or Carolyn] - Be sure to switch it up each night!</p>
<p>8:30 p.m. <i>Lower Lodge Two-Bedroom Suite</i></p>	<p>Open mic sharing of stories and songs [Host: Karen]</p>

Tuesday, Sept. 23

8-10 a.m. <i>Historic Dining Room</i>	Breakfast
8 a.m. - 9:50 a.m. <i>Chico Hot Springs, location of your choice</i>	Enter the day writing Prompts provided in your welcome packet
10 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. <i>Board room</i>	THE UNTAMED WRITER [Carolyn] For writers who run with the wolves, a guide to getting the raw, wild beauty of your story on the page. We will use songs as prompts. We'll use nature and setting as prompts. I'll give a guide to designing your own grounding practice with the uncommon free-write.
Noon to 12:45 p.m. <i>Board room</i>	EIGHT SECONDS AT A TIME: WRITE LIKE A RODEO CHAMP [Karen]
1 p.m. <i>Chico Saloon or Poolside Grille</i>	Lunch
2 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. <i>Board room</i>	THE BASICS WITH A TWIST + SONG FEEDBACK [Clay]
2 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. <i>Lower Lodge Two-Bedroom Suite</i>	THE ART OF COMPRESSION [Karen]
3 p.m. to 6 p.m.	WRITING IMMERSION [Writing time, designed for you by Karen]
6 p.m. <i>Chico Saloon</i>	Meet us for happy hour in Chico Saloon

7 p.m. <i>Chico Saloon</i>	DINNER TOGETHER [3 tables, choose your host: Karen, Clay or Carolyn] - be sure to switch it up each night!
8:30 p.m. <i>Board room</i>	Open mic sharing of stories and songs [Host: Clay]

Wednesday, Sept. 24

7:30-10:30 a.m. <i>Historic Dining Room</i>	Breakfast
8 a.m. - 9:50 a.m. <i>Chico Hot Springs, locations of your choice</i>	Enter the day writing Prompts provided in your welcome packet
8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. <i>On the trail</i>	Two-hour horseback riding for those who want to do it. (At your own expense.) Requires reservation. https://rockinhk.com/chico-barn/ Otherwise, writing immersion time.
11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. <i>Poolside Grille or Chico Saloon</i>	Lunch
1 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. <i>Board room</i>	WHERE STORIES AND SONGS CONVERGE - HYBRID [Karen, Carolyn and Clay]

2 p.m. -2:45 p.m. <i>Board room</i>	SONGWRITING & THE POWER OF THREE [Clay]
2 p.m. -2:45 p.m. <i>Large chalet</i>	YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO TAME TO BE UNTAMED [Carolyn] Outlines that live and breathe, outlines that are road maps Five issues you want clarity on from the start Five pacts to make with your writer self Five disciplines that will serve you With WRITING IMMERSION [Designed by Carolyn] By the end of this session, you should have an outline and several working pages, a scene list
3:30-5:30 p.m. <i>Various locations</i>	WRITING IMMERSION or CHICO EXTRA CURRICULAR (or something)! Time to write, designed by you with Karen and Carolyn mentoring
5:30 p.m. <i>Chico Saloon</i>	Happy hour
6:30 p.m. <i>Historic Dining Room</i>	DINNER TOGETHER [3 tables, choose your host: Karen, Clay or Carolyn] - be sure to switch it up each night!
8:30 p.m. <i>Board room</i>	Open mic sharing of stories and songs [Host: Carolyn]

Thursday, Sept. 25 {Day Pass} {Our "Star" Day}

8-10 a.m. <i>Historic Dining Room</i>	Breakfast
8 a.m.	ENTER THE DAY WRITING Prompts provided in your welcome packet

<p>- 9:50 a.m. <i>Chico Hot Springs, locations of your choice</i></p>	
<p>10 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. <i>Board room</i></p>	<p>THE ART OF CREATIVE CONTRAST [Clay]</p>
<p>11 a.m.- 11:45 a.m. <i>Board room</i></p>	<p>YOUR STORY IS A SONG - NO, WAIT, YOUR SONG IS A STORY! [Carolyn] In this session, we'll help you identify the narrative elements of a story you're working on. We'll use the song as a lens into how to plot a story in a compressed narrative. You'll learn how to make your story lean -- and make it as memorable as a song you can't forget.</p>
<p>NOON - 1:45 p.m. Historic Dining Room</p>	<p>Working lunch/Writers in Conversation/Designing the Writing Life WRITERS IN CONVERSATION Presentation of Karen's and Carolyn's writing with Q & A about process Carolyn will read new work, plus an excerpt from her memoir, <i>Boundless</i>, published December 2024 Karen will read from her novel-in-progress <i>When the Trees Go Silent</i> and a selected short work</p>
<p>2-2:45 p.m. <i>Board room</i></p>	<p>READ, THEN WRITE METHOD - JORGE BORGES STYLE [Karen]</p>
<p>3 p.m. to 5 p.m. <i>Board room</i></p>	<p>CO-WRITING WORKSHOP [Clay]</p>
<p>6 p.m.</p>	<p>DINNER TOGETHER</p>

<i>Chico Saloon</i>	[3 tables, choose your host: Karen, Clay or Carolyn] - be sure to switch it up each night! Eat light tonight! We're having dessert for a Happy Trails night at the Large Chalet
8 p.m. <i>Large chalet</i>	HAPPY TRAILS NIGHT! Featuring fruit, dessert, wine Open mic sharing of stories and songs [Host: Karen]

Friday, Sept. 26

8-10 a.m. <i>Historic Dining Room</i>	Breakfast Enter the day writing Prompts provided in your welcome packet
8 a.m. - 9:50 a.m. <i>Historic Dining Room</i>	SETTING OF INTENTIONS/PRACTICES/GOALS Letter to Your Future Published Self Summon Your Rugged Courage [Carolyn]
11 a.m.	Check-out time
Noon to 1 p.m.	HOW TO GET PUBLISHED How to pitch a song [Clay] How to pitch a book with a query letter, book proposal [Carolyn] How to pitch live -- like at Thriller Fest! [Karen] If we want this: How to pitch reported essays and companion pieces/How to make money from your newsletter (Substack) or blog (Medium) -- and build your author platform
1 to 2 p.m.	BLACKOUT POETRY, BLACKOUT LYRICS [Karen, Clay, Carolyn]

Breakfast

You will receive a \$27 voucher for breakfast, for use in the Historic Dining Room.

See menu here:

<https://www.chicohotsprings.com/dining/historic-dining-room>

Lunch

You will receive a \$30 voucher for lunch, for use in the Poolside Grille or Chico Saloon.

See the menus here:

<https://www.chicohotsprings.com/dining/chico-saloon>

<https://www.chicohotsprings.com/dining/poolside-grille>

Dinner

You will receive a \$60 voucher for dinner, for use in the Historic Dining Room or Chico Saloon on the nights we're dining there (two nights)

<https://www.chicohotsprings.com/dining/historic-dining-room>

The vouchers cover food, soft drinks, tax and gratuity up to the amount of the voucher. Generally, alcoholic beverages have not been figured into the nightly average of eating at either the Saloon or Historic Dining Room. Any food costs over and above the S & S vouchers will be charged as an incident to your personal credit card, which is held by Chico Hot Springs when you check in.