

# Celebrate Together!



Plan Your Family Reunion in **Baltimore!**

# Welcome to Baltimore!

Dear Reunion Organizer:

Reunions are a time to reconnect, rejoice and reminisce. Reconnect with old friends, rejoice in the accomplishments of your family or the addition of a new member, and reminisce about the past. No matter the size of the reunion you are planning, Baltimore is the perfect location to celebrate. As the second largest immigration point of entry into the United States, Baltimore has always opened its arms to new arrivals and their families. That's not hard to understand once you have walked down Baltimore's streets. The African American, Greek, German, Italian, Polish and many other ethnic neighborhoods that stand side by side are a testament to Baltimore's heritage.

This reunion "how-to" kit provides you with a step-by-step approach to planning your reunion in Baltimore. As an additional resource, please call upon the Baltimore Area Convention and Visitors Association (BACVA) to assist you in your planning. The dedicated and knowledgeable staff can help with hotel leads and tour planning as well as provide brochures and maps of the city. We are here to help you discover fun, excitement and exceptional entertainment during your visit to Baltimore.

We invite you to make Baltimore a part of your family's traditions and history. Whether your reunion is large or small, come inspire a generation, tell your stories and enjoy the city of legends. Bring a piece of your heart and leave it in Baltimore. And take a piece of Baltimore home with you.

Sincerely,



Martin O'Malley  
Mayor  
City of Baltimore



Lelie R. Doggett  
President & CEO  
Baltimore Area Convention  
and Visitors Association

# Table of Contents

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Reconnect in Baltimore!	3	<i>Step 4: Fun Times</i>	10
Why choose Baltimore for your reunion?	4	<i>Step 5: Eating Out: In and Around Baltimore</i>	11
Accommodations	4	<i>Step 6: Budgeting and Making Arrangements</i>	12
Attractions and Sports	4	Look Before You Lodge: Hotel Inspection Checklist	12
Entertainment and Nightlife	5	Let's Make A Deal	14
Dining	5	Budget Worksheet	15
<i>Step 1: Be Sure You Have a Plan</i>	6	<i>Step 7: The Invites Are Out</i>	17
<i>Step 2: Any Volunteers?</i>	8	<i>Step 8: Away We Go!</i>	17
Leader	8	How To Get Here From There	17
Treasurer	8	Air Transportation	17
Secretary	9	Ground Transportation	17
Historian	9	Helpful Hints	18
Events Coordinator	9	Know Yourself and Your Group	18
Food Coordinator	9	Reunion Services from the Baltimore Area	
<i>Step 3: The More the Merrier</i>	9	Convention and Visitors Association	18

# Reconnect in Baltimore!

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Baltimore is a city where memories are born for millions of visitors each year. Make your memories at places like the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the Maryland Science Center and Oriole Park at Camden Yards in the revitalized Inner Harbor; explore the many museums including the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Walters Art Museum in the Cultural District; and reconnect over a pile of hot steamed Maryland crabs in any of our neighborhoods. For interests in African American culture and history, Baltimore has even more to offer. From the Underground Railroad to some of the most famous heroes and legends in history, Baltimore has it all. The city is the proud home of the NAACP headquarters; the first wax museum of African American history, The Great Blacks In Wax Museum; and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture.

And, as if you need another reason to visit, throughout the year Baltimore celebrates with music, fireworks, festivals and more! There is something for everyone in the family to enjoy. In the tradition of its friendly heritage, Baltimore invites you with open arms. So consider holding your reunion in a city known for bringing people together. Come home to Baltimore.



# Why choose Baltimore for your reunion?

- ❖ Many hotels, attractions and venues are within walking distance from downtown. And if your feet get tired, hop aboard one of Baltimore's unique water taxis - they transport you to more than 35 of Baltimore's attractions lining the Inner Harbor.
- ❖ Baltimore boasts extraordinary neighborhoods - visit Little Italy for great food, Mount Vernon for arts and culture, the Inner Harbor for family fun and Fell's Point for antique shopping.
- ❖ Most of all, Baltimore provides first-class hotels, attractions, cultural institutions, and a smorgasbord of restaurants, entertainment venues, shopping and an eclectic pub crawl area, all within a close proximity - something very few cities in the United States can claim.

## Accommodations

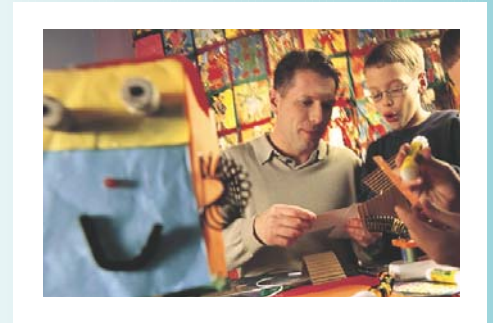
Currently, Baltimore offers most key hotel brands with:

- ❖ 6,500 total hotel rooms within the city
- ❖ 10,000 more rooms a short ride away
- ❖ New developments in progress such as Residence Inn by Marriott and Hampton Inn & Suites

## Attractions and Sports

There are more than 120 attractions in Baltimore and the surrounding areas - enough to satisfy each of your attendees. Highlights include:

- ❖ M&T Bank Stadium, the nest for the Baltimore Ravens football team
- ❖ Port Discovery, The Kid-Powered Museum, named one of America's top five children's museums
- ❖ Fort McHenry National Monument, the place where Francis Scott Key was inspired to write our national anthem
- ❖ USS Constellation, the last Civil War vessel afloat



# Why choose Baltimore for your reunion?

## Entertainment and Nightlife

Baltimore's nightlife runs the scope from martini bars to retro nightclubs. There's always something to do after hours, including:

- ❖ Power Plant LIVE - with six clubs, five restaurants and four attractions, Power Plant LIVE is a multimillion-dollar entertainment district in downtown Baltimore. Just one block from the Inner Harbor, this \$30 million center features 300,000 square feet of fun spilling out onto an outdoor plaza. Dining options include Asian, Cuban, Cajun and American cuisine.
- ❖ Mount Vernon Cultural District - a fine blend of theater, art and dining experiences.
- ❖ The West Side - a rejuvenated part of Baltimore and home to the Hippodrome Performing Arts Center.
- ❖ Fell's Point - one of Baltimore's eastern neighborhoods (just a short water taxi ride away!) boasts pubs, nightclubs and bars for any night owl.

## Dining

From five-course dinners to 10-legged meals (Maryland crabs), Baltimore serves up a whole new way of eating at over 1,000 restaurants and entertainment venues.

Dining options include:

- ❖ World-renowned Chesapeake Bay seafood
- ❖ Award-winning restaurants in Baltimore's own Little Italy
- ❖ Ethnic flavors from Ethiopian to Afghani to Greek to Japanese



# Step 1: Be Sure You Have a Plan

Just where do you begin to plan a reunion? The first thing you need to do is give yourself plenty of time - at least four months to do all the necessary planning so you will not feel so overwhelmed. After all, planning a reunion should be fun. So, make your plan, and have a great time.

Starting early will allow you the time to talk to others who have organized reunions and to individuals you have asked to assist in the planning. Whether you are planning a family, church, military, company, high school, fraternity, sorority or neighborhood reunion, past experience, new ideas and words of wisdom will be invaluable.

**Here's a handy timetable with the benchmark tasks for a successful reunion:**

## Four to six months before:

- ❖ Choose volunteers to assist
- ❖ Discuss reunion ideas with experienced reunion organizers
- ❖ Discuss with fellow participants and determine
  - ◆ what types of activities to include in the schedule of events
  - ◆ where to hold the specific events
  - ◆ what to serve and how to hold all meals
- ❖ Contact BACVA's group tour department for hotel or facility leads, caterers, entertainment and other reunion-related purchases
- ❖ Determine a budget
- ❖ Develop a mailing list of possible reunion attendees
- ❖ Consider opening a bank account
- ❖ Determine a contact person and mailing address

## Two to four months before:

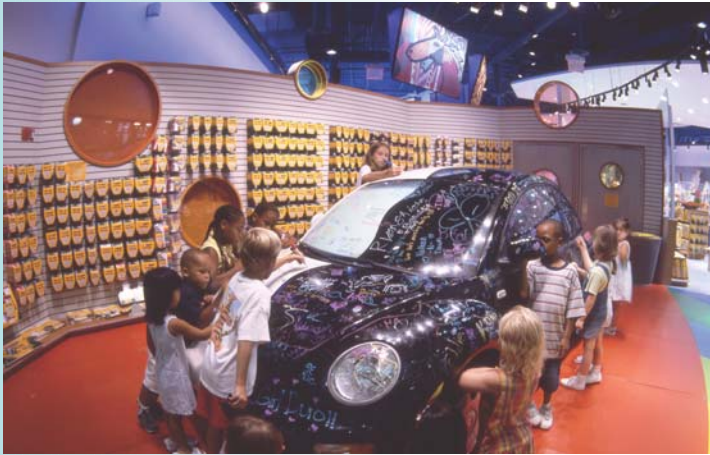
- ❖ Choose menus for each meal
- ❖ Send out initial invitations (postcards available from BACVA) - include any registration for family/organizational directory
- ❖ Approximate cost of entire reunion
- ❖ List any missing relations/members
- ❖ Finalize lodging, entertainment and restaurant reservations
- ❖ Send out first newsletter or informative letter on plans for reunion
- ❖ Send invitations to new people as they are found
- ❖ Have reunion members make their hotel reservations

## Two months before:

- ❖ Meet with hotel staff and visit any facility you will use
- ❖ Plan decorations and any other supplies you may need

## Six weeks before:

- ❖ Complete directory of attendees and deliver to printer
- ❖ Confirm lodging, entertainment, talent and restaurant reservations
- ❖ Contact BACVA for brochures, maps, etc.
- ❖ Order reunion giveaway items, such as T-shirts or buttons



## Two weeks before:

- ❖ Purchase decorations/supplies
- ❖ Review checklist
- ❖ Determine facility and hotel staff contacts for events

## Day before:

- ❖ Review final details with volunteers
- ❖ Solve any last-minute problems

## Reunion day:

- ❖ Set up displays and any rented equipment
- ❖ Decorate
- ❖ Have fun!

## Afterward:

- ❖ Settle accounts
- ❖ Write thank-you notes to volunteers, hotel staff and caterer



## Step 2: Any Volunteers?

Lining up plenty of help and support is the key to planning a successful reunion. Call a few of your friends or family members who would be interested in getting involved and ask for volunteers to assist you in planning the reunion. Dividing up the tasks will take the responsibility off one person's shoulders, bring in different ideas and help speed up the planning of your reunion.

Here are some possible volunteer positions to take care of:

- ❖ An event coordinator to help plan activities
- ❖ A treasurer to raise funds and define a budget
- ❖ A youth coordinator to plan children's activities
- ❖ A food coordinator to select meals, locations and caterers
- ❖ A secretary to send out invitations and periodically inform everyone of the status of the reunion

Other possible volunteers are:

- ❖ A family historian to research family tree
- ❖ A person to arrange transportation
- ❖ A person to manage the fundraising
- ❖ A person to organize setup and cleanup on the reunion day
- ❖ A person to order T-shirts, buttons and other amenities

### Leader

This is probably you. Whoever it is, he or she will assign tasks, coordinate volunteers, solve any problems, be diplomatic with hotel and facility staff, create committees if needed, and get the family or organization excited about the reunion.

### Treasurer

Your treasurer could be responsible for finding the lodging, making reservations and registering attendees for a reunion directory. The treasurer should be well-organized and have some bookkeeping ability.

## Secretary

The secretary will be responsible for keeping and updating the mailing list, mailing invitations, writing the newsletter and compiling the registration materials.

## Historian

The historian gets to "rediscover" your family or organization. This person will gather yearbooks, photo albums, any historical documents, etc. He or she will need to have a knack for doing a little research. For a family reunion, your historian might even create a family tree to be displayed at the reunion. Responsibilities will include organizing the family group photo details.

## Events Coordinator

The events coordinator is responsible for all the great fun you and your family or organization will have. He or she will take suggestions from the reunion attendees and make a schedule of activities, including children's activities. The events coordinator will take care of booking any talent and reserving any equipment and be involved with cleaning up afterward.

## Food Coordinator

The food coordinator will help to decide what food should be served and whether meals will be catered in a restaurant or banquet room. He or she will be responsible for arranging any catering and making any group reservations. The person will also be in charge of arranging cleaning up after the reunion, if necessary.

# *Step 3: The More the Merrier*

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Sit down and make a list of all your relatives, including addresses and telephone numbers, that you and your volunteers can immediately contact. Don't worry if you initially forget somebody. Someone from this first list can lead you to other possible attendees who may be more difficult to find.

# Step 4: Fun Times

Now it's time for the event coordinator to discuss with participants what activities they think the group would enjoy. After writing down everyone's suggestions, the event coordinator can start building a schedule to include as many of your group's favorite activities as possible.

## These reunion activities will add spice to your gathering:

- ❖ Picnic lunches
- ❖ Crab feasts
- ❖ Fishing trips
- ❖ Softball
- ❖ Camping
- ❖ Shopping
- ❖ Going to church together
- ❖ Cruises on the Inner Harbor
- ❖ Walking tours
- ❖ Sporting events

### Just for kids, ages 3 - 8:

- ❖ Coloring books
- ❖ Finger-painting
- ❖ Hire a clown or magician
- ❖ "I Spy" or "Simon Says" games
- ❖ Checkers
- ❖ Board games

### For kids 8 and up:

- ❖ Dance contests
- ❖ Cards
- ❖ Softball
- ❖ Football
- ❖ Pool or pizza party at the hotel



# Step 5: Eating Out: In and Around Baltimore

Now it's time to think about what to eat at your reunion. Your food coordinator should find out what everyone likes to eat and will also discuss with your group the choice of either cooking your own food, hiring a caterer or dining out. Once these issues are settled, the food coordinator can begin preparing a schedule.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ❖ BACVA can assist you with referrals to venues, caterers and special event planners.
- ❖ Organize a crab feast.
- ❖ Have a meal catered at a unique location.
- ❖ Hold a potluck meal, everyone bring his or her favorite dish.
- ❖ Have a banquet at a restaurant or hotel.
- ❖ Make-your-own sundae buffet.



# Step 6: Budgeting and Making Arrangements

Hey, you're almost done! Now, let's talk about the treasurer. He or she needs to figure out the total cost for the reunion, the cost per person and your group's budget for each day of the reunion. See "Let's Make A Deal" for more ways to help out on your budget! On page 15, we have included a worksheet to help keep your expenses organized.

Remember to include:

- ❖ The cost of transportation to and from events
- ❖ Lodging - BACVA will send a lead to hotels for rates and availability (see Helpful Hints!)
- ❖ Food (cooking out or dining out)
- ❖ Telephone calls
- ❖ Printing
- ❖ Decorations
- ❖ Rentals
- ❖ Photographer
- ❖ Taxes
- ❖ Postage

## Look Before You Lodge: Hotel Inspection Checklist

Once you and your group have narrowed your choice of lodging, take a look around each facility to see which one best meets your standards. Here's a guide to help you keep score.

### 1. Things To Observe

- ❖ Appearance (inside and out)
- ❖ Security and safety systems (fire exits, room sprinkler system)
- ❖ Condition of all rooms (sleeping/dining/meeting)
- ❖ Are employees helpful?
- ❖ Is the size of the registration area adequate?
- ❖ Is there access to public transportation?
- ❖ Is there adequate, convenient parking?
- ❖ Are there ice machines and do they work properly?
- ❖ Is there a pool?



## 2. Does The Hotel Offer

- ❖ In-house movies?
- ❖ Gift shop?
- ❖ Bell service?
- ❖ Safe deposit boxes?
- ❖ Barber/hair dresser?

## 3. Things To Ask

- ❖ What types of sleeping rooms are available?
  - ◆ King size
  - ◆ Doubles
  - ◆ Suites
- ❖ Are special rates available during certain periods?
- ❖ Will reservation cards be provided for your group?
- ❖ Is audio-visual support available?
- ❖ Does the hotel offer shuttle service?
- ❖ Is room service available 24 hours a day?
- ❖ Can you bring in your own snacks and beverages?
- ❖ What's the hotel room tax and sales tax?

## 4. Ask for a copy of the hotel's complimentary room policy and a copy of menu selections for meal functions.



## Let's Make A Deal

The art of negotiating with the hotel manager could really help you cut costs.

Selling your reunion to the hotel by emphasizing the spending power of your group is a great strategy to try. This works if you're planning a banquet or large food functions.

Another strategy is to sell the reunion as a great public relations opportunity to potentially foster hundreds of loyal repeat customers, especially if you plan to meet again next year.

Be honest with the hotel manager: Tell him or her that you want to stay in his or her hotel and show your group a great time, but you have to stay with a certain budget. If that hotel manager really wants your reunion, he or she will be flexible, but within reason. Remember, none of these or any other negotiating tactics may work, but it doesn't hurt to try. In fact, trying could really pay off. Good luck!



### Hints:

1. Bring records, if you have any, of previous reunions to show the number of rooms used and expenditure history of your group.
2. Ask hotels when their "off" or "low" seasons occur. Typically, room rates are less expensive during these times of the year.
3. Letting hotels know you're "shopping around" may give you some bargaining leverage.
4. Ask for complimentary items like free storage for anything you need to ship in advance, hospitality suites, table decorations or special menu items.

# Budget Worksheet

## Reunion Income

Contributions/donations  
Keepsake, book and T-shirt sales  
Fees  
Corporate sponsorships  
Door prizes/awards  
Reunionships  
(contributions for members  
unable to afford the reunion)

In-kind (time, goods, services)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cash

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## How are we going to pay for all of this?

First, using the budget form shown below as a guide, figure out the approximate cost of your reunion. Then divide that amount by the number of people attending your reunion. This will give you the cost per person. You may have to juggle the numbers to come up with a cost per person amount that is reasonable for your attendees. The treasurer will be responsible for collecting and handling the money for all purchases.

## Ways to raise money:

- ❖ Garage sales
- ❖ Bake sales
- ❖ Raffles
- ❖ Selling cooked dinners
- ❖ Selling mementos lets attendees take home memories while helping out with expenses. *Here are a few memento ideas:*
  - ◆ T-shirts
  - ◆ Caps
  - ◆ Mugs
  - ◆ Pens
  - ◆ Buttons
  - ◆ Tote bags



## Pre-Reunion Expenses

Registration supplies	\$ _____
Phone calls	\$ _____
Postage	\$ _____
Decorations	\$ _____
Awards/certificates/prizes	\$ _____
Picnic paper goods	\$ _____
Program printing	\$ _____
Rentals	\$ _____
<i>(a/v equipment, tent, wheelchairs, sports equipment)</i>	
Rentals	\$ _____
Decorations/banners/signs	\$ _____
Displays	\$ _____
Flowers	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Subtotal	\$ _____

## Reunion Day Expenses

Entertainers/musicians	\$ _____
Photo/Videographer	\$ _____
All meals	\$ _____
Beverages	\$ _____
Subtotal	\$ _____

## Taxes

(fill in % for your location) 5% sales tax and 7.5% occupancy tax in Baltimore city	\$ _____
Subtotal	\$ _____

## Post-Reunion Expenses

Printing (post-reunion newsletter)	\$ _____
Postage	\$ _____
Pictures/developing	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Subtotal	\$ _____

## Step 7: The Invites Are Out

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If you are following the suggested timetable, the initial invitations should go out about two to four months before your reunion. You will want your reunion secretary to mail a newsletter or two several weeks after the invitations are mailed. These newsletters can be as simple or involved as you wish. Remember, the purpose of the newsletters is to remind your attendees of the pending reunion, as well as to get them excited about the different activities and events that will take place at the reunion. You can also take the opportunity to update everyone of the status of the reunion and ask for any help that may be needed.

## Step 8: Away We Go!

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### How To Get Here From There

#### Air Transportation

The Baltimore/Washington International Airport (BWI) is just 15 minutes from downtown. BWI boasts:

- ❖ 714 average daily arrivals and departures
- ❖ 64 average daily nonstop destinations
- ❖ 52 carriers includes Southwest Airlines, US Airways, Delta, United and Northwest

#### Ground Transportation

Baltimore is easily accessible by both train and car and is within driving distance of more than one-third of the nation's population.

- ❖ Baltimore is a major stop for Amtrak's high-speed Acela Express service.
- ❖ Baltimore is easily accessible by I-95 and I-83 as well as I-70.
- ❖ Baltimore's Light Rail and Metro systems carry passengers from outlying hotels and BWI Airport to the city.

Check [www.baltimore.org](http://www.baltimore.org) for more information; and for airline schedules and updates, check the BWI Airport Web site at [www.bwiairport.com](http://www.bwiairport.com).

# Helpful Hints

## Know Yourself and Your Group

Although it takes lots of work, large gatherings can be great fun. If your group is smaller, take advantage of the smaller numbers and plan a more intimate reunion. Whatever the size, the excitement that you generate will carry over to your volunteers.

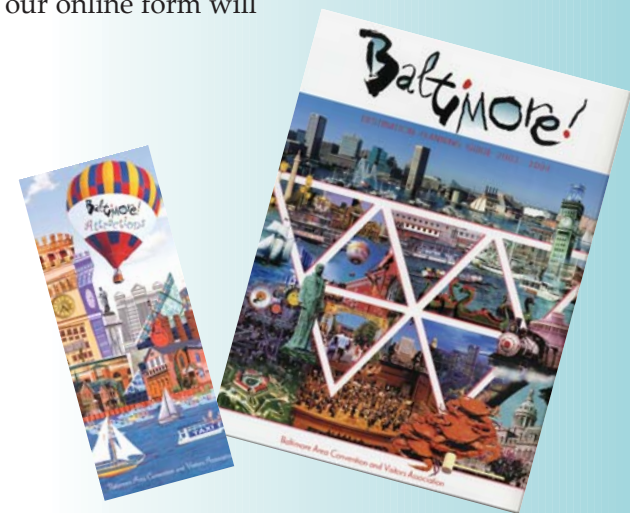
Get together with your initial group of volunteers to begin work on assembling the mailing list. You will come up with more names, and others may have good suggestions concerning other volunteers.

## Reunion Services from the Baltimore Area Convention and Visitors Association

When you're bringing a group to Baltimore, we have creative ideas and experiences in store for you. The Baltimore Area Convention and Visitors Association (BACVA) is your source to assist with reunion planning. Services include:

- ❖ Tour planning ideas.
- ❖ Brochures and booklets such as Destination Planning Guide, visitor guides, maps, Attractions brochures, Motorcoach directional maps, Group Dining guides, Unusual Party & Reception Sites guides.
- ❖ Visuals such as slides and videos to help boost attendance to your reunion.
- ❖ Hotel leads at [www.baltimore.org](http://www.baltimore.org). Designed for group and meeting planners, our online form will expedite your search for finding hotel rooms.

For more information about making Baltimore your next reunion destination, contact BACVA at (800) 343-3468, extension 7065. Let us show you how we can make your planning easy.



# Baltimore!

100 Light Street · 12<sup>th</sup> Floor

Baltimore, MD 21202

Phone: 800.343.3468 or 410.659.7300

Fax: 410.727.2308

[www.Baltimore.org](http://www.Baltimore.org)

