I Joined Buffer 3 Days Before The Retreat: Here Are My Retreat Reflections

I got the job offer of my dreams – live, mid-call – from my now-manager, Hailley Griffis, on March 27th, at exactly 3:06 PM ET.

We'd been in conversation for weeks about a Senior Brand and Community Manager role at Buffer and I had a chance to experience Collaboration Day with my future team. Then, during a follow-up call, Hailley extended the offer – and moments later, an email landed in my inbox:

"We'd love to invite you to join the Buffer journey, Sabreen!"

My heart thudded so loudly I couldn't hear anything else. I read it once, then again. I had a feeling things were progressing well, but I never imagined Hailley would share the news live!

To give you more context: working at Buffer had been a dream of mine for years. As an immigrant who grew up in New Delhi, India, and built her career across continents, I had admired Buffer with wide eyes since my college days. It felt far-fetched at the time, until that moment on Zoom!

Hailley's email read like a dream finally catching up with reality.

It included a high-level overview of everything: healthcare coverage, compensation, and the generous benefits Buffer offers, including a four-day workweek. But one detail stood out immediately:

"As we've mentioned during this interview process, Buffer's annual retreat will be from April 27th – May 2nd, 2025, in

Antalya, Türkiye. If you choose to accept our offer, we'd love to have you at the retreat, as this is truly valuable time for our fully remote team."

I remember feeling overwhelmed with gratitude and a deep sense of belonging. I said to myself:

"Sabreen, from where you are now, if this is how warm and welcoming it feels before you've even stepped into the house, imagine how incredibly healthy and wholesome it must be to work at a company that values you this much."

(Of course) I accepted the offer that very day, and joined Buffer as their Senior Brand and Community Manager on April 23rd. Three days after I started my new role, I boarded a flight from the Boston Logan airport to Antalya, Türkiye, to attend our company retreat and meet my new teammates!

Looking back, while my onboarding officially started in Boston, with systems, Slack, and thoughtful prep; my true sense of belonging began in Türkiye.

In the reflections ahead, I'll share what it was like to join a fully remote team like Buffer, and how going on the company retreat so early on helped shape my journey in ways I hadn't imagined.

The wonderful Buffer welcome package I received days after accepting the offer.

Joining Buffer; from offer to takeoff

After I accepted the offer, the next day I heard from the wonderful Jenna Meindertsma, Buffer’s Senior People Operations Specialist. Her email was packed with meticulous details: system setup, tooling, my new laptop, email setup, and payroll.

One unforgettable piece of information was the thoughtful overview of everything that needed to happen before the Türkiye retreat: e-visa instructions, flight booking options;

alongside an organized stack of travel support documents. Jenna was the silent hero behind the scenes, gently nudging, guiding, and making sure I was fully set up.

My first two days at Buffer

On my first day at Buffer, a well-organized onboarding doc was waiting for me. It outlined everything from reading materials to help me steep in Buffer’s DNA to what was expected of me over the first 30, 60, and 90 days.

My onboarding doc, that became my compass as a new Bufferoo. Everything was checklist-style: clear and actionable, and I couldn’t wait to dive in!

This was the first time while onboarding to a new team that I

felt like I wasn’t inconveniencing anyone. People were thinking ahead for me, guiding me through things I didn’t even know to ask about. In no time, I was fully prepped for the journey ahead.

Getting ready for Türkiye

Within my onboarding document, there was a retreat-specific section with clearly outlined goals.

Here were the three main areas of focus for me in Türkiye:

1. Connect in person with Darcy Peters, my Culture Buddy.
2. Meet the Product Managers, if possible: Amanda Marochko, Brandon Green, Nathan Nannenga, and Diego Sanchez.
3. Spend time with teammates involved in an initiative I would be working on, people like Simon Heaton, Åsa Nyström, Jenny Terry, and the PMs above, who were actively creating content.

I also received access to a retreat-specific Notion page that covered everything from the agenda to packing tips and hotel details. It gave me ample time to absorb it all in advance.

The detailed Notion page dedicated to Buffer’s 2025 Türkiye retreat.
I was also assigned a Retreat Buddy, Mick Mahady!

Mick even added me on LinkedIn and reached out well before my start date, sharing a treasure trove of planning, packing, and preparation tips. That early outreach made everything feel a little lighter.

Before I knew it, my first two days flew by. Suddenly, it was time to fly to Türkiye!

By the time I zipped up my suitcase and headed to the Boston Logan airport, I felt something I didn’t expect as a new joiner: peace.

My Indian passport, and a fresh manicure; all set to depart for Türkiye.

My journey to Antalya, Türkiye

April 26th, Day 0 – my journey to Türkiye began. From Boston to Türkiye, it was about a 17-hour journey door to door. Boston to Istanbul: 9.5 hours. A stopover in Istanbul: 3.5 hours. Then just over an hour to Antalya. With all the transitions and security checks, you need courage, hot tea, and far too many granola bars.

At Logan airport in Boston, I ran into my first Bufferoo, Brandon – a local teammate I'd briefly met virtually before even getting hired. That overlap gave us time to chat, laugh,

and ground the experience in a little extra connection before departure. Thank you, Brandon!

Meeting my first first Bufferoo, Brandon, at the Boston Logan airport.
When I landed in Antalya and stepped out of the airport, I read a Slack message from Jenna:

“Look for the Buffer sign when you arrive!”

I looked up, saw the sign, and ran toward it like a kindergartener. I had arrived!

The Slack message from Jenna sharing that my Buffer transport guides were waiting for me outside the Antalya airport.
As I settled into the van, we swung by another terminal to pick up Hamish Macpherson, a Senior Software Engineer at Buffer. When Hamish hopped in, I suddenly felt another warm wave of belonging. My heart started racing, and Hailley was texting me, counting down the minutes.

As we neared the hotel, I found myself mentally rehearsing every possible greeting, and when we finally arrived at the hotel, there she was: Hailley, running toward me with a big bear hug. It felt like I was home. I had found my people!

It was late, and after a few rounds of hellos, I picked up my Buffer badge (tears in my eyes seeing my name beside Buffer’s), dropped my luggage in a palace-like room, and

headed downstairs for a light dinner with Hailley and Hamish.

First dinner with my manager, Hailley Griffis, the night I arrived in Antalya, Türkiye.
Despite the long travel day, everyone was warm, open, and welcoming. The level of care I was met with — especially the genuine curiosity around how I was feeling — was deeply heartwarming.

The retreat kickoff: people, purpose, and a toast to $22M

April 27th, Day 1 — was a slower day where teammates from nearer countries started arriving.

Ahead of the retreat, we were all given access to a detailed retreat agenda on Notion – a full breakdown of what lay ahead.

It was Day 4 for me at Buffer and I had a few clear goals to make the most of this supercharged onboarding:

1. **Meet everyone, and be the super-connector you are**. The nature of my role requires building deeper 1:1 relationships, and I was genuinely curious and excited to begin.
2. **Go over all the checklist items from the onboarding doc, especially the retreat-related ones.** This included connecting with product managers, my role buddy, and my culture buddy. I also wanted to meet my immediate teammates, along with Buffer's Founder CEO, Joel Gascoigne.
3. **Contribute meaningfully in core team sessions** and absorb as much context as possible.
4. **Be a listener and observer.** Tune into the styles of working, cultural nuances, and show up as my full self in every session and team-building activity.

With those goals in mind, I set out with an open mind and an open heart!

The welcome event

The first big moment on our agenda was the team welcome event, held the evening after arrival. Until then, I had only met Bufferoos in pairs or small groups. This would be the first time most of the company would be in the same space.

Surprisingly, I felt no anxiety. Just excitement to see new faces!

The welcome event gave us all a chance to float around, mingle outside our usual circles, and for me – to introduce myself. I had met Joel briefly that morning for the first time at brunch, but seeing him again reminded me why I had joined

Buffer in the first place.

It’s true: culture starts from the top. And when you meet Joel, you understand exactly why Buffer’s DNA is the way it is.

Day 1 of the Buffer retreat, at the welcome event.
I remember taking a quiet moment to myself, just to soak it all in; how lucky I felt to be surrounded by such kind, brilliant minds.

At the welcome event, Joel gave a toast that stayed with me, and it set the tone for everything that followed.

He spoke about how these retreats aren’t just about travel or team-building, but about people, and what it means to feel at

home among a truly special group of humans. With that, he raised his glass to Buffer being on the cusp of hitting **$22 million in ARR** — which we did just a few days later. We were also approaching our **all-time high** in annual recurring revenue.

It was truly special.

Dinner that evening was cozy and intimate. It gave me the chance to connect with smaller groups in even more meaningful ways.

Many folks were still quite jet-lagged on the day of the welcome event, and the intentional slower pace set for Day 1 by the People team was another example of Buffer's people-first approach: Planning the retreat in a way that gave everyone space to take care of themselves.

Keynotes, context, and the first time I felt part of the work

April 28th, Day 2 — and the first day of sessions. I was incredibly excited to hear from Joel in-depth for the first time!

ReTreats: A Buffer tradition

But before we got started, I made sure to drop off my share of traditional Indian snacks at our ReTreat table, where each Bufferoo had contributed treats from their home countries. That table felt like a cultural bridge; small, delicious tokens telling stories of where we come from. I felt proud to be part of that bridge, and proud to be putting India on the Buffer map!

The Indian treats I carried as part of Buffer’s ReTreats table tradition.
Watching others share a piece of themselves — through food, stories, and mementos — was a small but powerful window into who we are. It added so much depth to the sense of connection already forming in the room.

Joel’s keynote

The welcome keynote from Joel was a generous window into Buffer’s history.

It was the perfect level-set to understand the roads Buffer has traveled to get here. Joel walked us through what has set Buffer apart over the years — values like defaulting to transparency, a generous freemium model, high-quality content,

and a commitment to building a delightful product.

The keynote presentation by Joel, Buffer’s Founder CEO.
While I was already familiar with most of Buffer’s journey, hearing Joel lay it all out firsthand brought it to life in a new way.

What stood out most was his candor around the state of Buffer, especially the climb back from a multi-year decline. He shared that after our last peak, ARR dropped 20% over four years — hitting a low of $17,878,510 on January 7, 2024. And how it took thoughtful strategy and relentless execution to turn things around. That was a real moment of perspective for me.

That’s also when it hit me: 91% of the current team joined before our recent growth phase that began in January 2024.

That number alone speaks volumes about the culture of trust and resilience that’s been built at Buffer. And for me to walk into a company after a chapter like that — and still feel the lift in the room — was everything!

The keynote helped me *see* the company from every angle: metrics, mission, milestones. I realized this isn’t just a product-led company; it’s a people-powered one. We all received a Buffer-coded swag bag at the end of the session to seal the moment, which was such a nice touch!

As if on cue, Joel’s welcome toast from the night before set the tone — that afternoon, we hit $22M in ARR. Smiles all around, the timing felt like a sign!

Cross-functional team sessions, and finding the rhythm in real time

Joel’s keynote left me eager to get closer to the work.

The next day, April 29th, Day 3 — I joined a series of team-wide and functional sessions that helped bring Buffer’s top-line priorities into sharper focus.

One of the cross-functional team sessions at Buffer’s Türkiye retreat.
These sessions helped me do more than observe; they helped me find my footing and start contributing early on with clarity.

Personal stories and a shift in perspective

A cherished tradition at Buffer retreats that I was most curious about and excited to participate in at the retreat are personal stories.

How it works

Teammates are split into small groups to share their personal journeys. Each group is made up of 3 – 4 people, intentionally

mixed across time zones, teams, seniority, and tenure.

The idea is to connect with people you might not have already interacted with, and to go deep, fast. Each group had two dinner sessions across two nights, with two people sharing per night — though some groups adjusted the format based on flow.

It's isn't meant to be performative or polished; just Bufferoos sharing who they are, where they've been, and how they've arrived at this moment.

Here's how it works:

- Teammates take turns; each person answers the prompt: *"Start from childhood and tell us about your life, and what led you to who you are today."*
- You may simply choose to speak from the heart! But if you feel more comfortable preparing, you can jot down some elements you'd like to touch on so you don't forget.
- Most folks end up speaking for anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour.
- Common themes include: family life and siblings, school and hobbies, goals and failures, formative experiences, relationships (and, if relevant, how you met your current partner), previous jobs, your experience applying at Buffer, and your time at Buffer so far.

My story, and what I took from theirs

Each Bufferoo was encouraged to lean into transparency during this experience. But, of course, it was fully up to us what to share and what to leave out. The goal was to open up so your teammates could get to know you more deeply, and to listen with care as your group mates did the same.

This was a massive departure from company cultures I had been part of before. I was being encouraged to be vulnerable at work? By the People team? Is this a trap? How vulnerable? Why?

I had all sorts of questions circling in my head!

When it came time, I met my group (15): Åsa, Joe Birch and Diego. I hadn’t spent much time with this group, and I was intrigued – and a bit unsure – about the depth of sharing involved.

On our first personal story dinner night, Åsa and Diego kicked things off, and I was in absolute awe of their vulnerability. It completely shook me, and filled me with admiration for the roads my teammates had traveled to get to this point.

I was still surprised at the depth of what was shared, but going through the first round gave me more confidence to open up about my own life when it was my turn the next day – which, honestly, took me a while to even begin to encapsulate.

And there I was, opening up my life to new teammates; sharing things I hadn’t shared with anyone in a long time. The next day, I could tell we were all more leaned in, with warmth and consideration, after everything we’d unpacked over those two dinners. Hearing teammates reflect on everything from childhood to self-work to reinvention was simply amazing.

A value, lived

Buffer’s core value of Default to Transparency really shined through these story sessions. I realized: this is a company that actually follows through on its values. They are real, living, breathing, and embodied. So rare, and so fascinating.

It became clear: at Buffer, openness isn’t penalized, it’s welcomed; a perfect antidote to years of corporate programming. I could tell my nervous system was shifting, and I was beyond relieved.

Team Wide Support Time, an unexpected

favorite

On April 29th, after two full days of team-wide and core team sessions, I got to be part of something called Team-Wide Support Time.

Company-wide, Team Wide Support Time (TWST) session.
We broke into small roundtable groups to tackle incoming customer support tickets together.

I was amazed at how close I felt to our customers during that hour and a half; fingers on the keyboard, working through support tickets, understanding the pain points and blockers our end users were experiencing.

I ended up having the opportunity to speak with 10 customers,

which was such a fun experience since I’m usually chatting with members of our community in a different context. And I even made it onto our leaderboard!

Interestingly, toward the end, I also witnessed a major support incident play out in real time – and it was nothing short of inspiring to see the entire Advocacy team spring into action.

Small wins and joyful moments, even while onboarding

Some roundtables continued the next day, and by this time, I was lucky to have met with everyone on my onboarding checklist!

Somewhere in between, it was also lovely to grab breakfast with the content team, where Hailley gifted each of us a beautiful white notebook. I hold it close to my heart, and it’s become the centerpiece of all my planning – including the chicken-scratch notes for this very blog!

The beautiful diary my manager, Hailley, gifted each one of us in the content team.
One thing I was especially keen to do during the retreat was to execute early – even while onboarding – to show initiative and earn trust.

I wasn’t sure if the opportunity would arise, but during one of the content team huddles, we decided to capture video content around our teammates and their favorite Buffer features. A few hours later, I had many interesting pieces of content locked in – enough to give us a content runway for months. Hurrah!

It was a small but meaningful win for my newbie spirit and was warmly appreciated by the team. Stay tuned, this content is on its way!

All the fun video content I captured during the Buffer retreat.

Ending the retreat with gratitude, and a full heart

We concluded all the working sessions with an incredible team dinner and a late-night karaoke session, where I sang my heart out and got to know my teammates on an even deeper level.

The energy all around me felt like a powerful omen for what lay ahead!

On our final day, May 1st, Buffer generously gave us a free morning and afternoon, or an overflow day for anyone with team

activities or sessions still planned. At the end of the day, we gathered for a team photo and, best of all, the Gratitude Session.

Team photo session at the Buffer retreat in Antalya, Türkiye.
For the gratitude session, we all sat in a big circle, held space for one another, and took turns (voluntarily) sharing our gratitude.

This was a very emotional part of the retreat for me, and I was nervous to step up and speak. But after my retreat buddy Mick shared his gratitude for my presence and participation, I felt deeply seen and, and it gave me the encouragement I needed to speak from the heart.

The company-wise gratitude session held on the last day of the Buffer retreat.
I took to the mic and shared what this experience had opened up for me; naming the people who held space, showed me the ropes, and invited me in. I especially thanked Joel for being such a selfless leader and for welcoming me into Buffer with open arms. Joel’s response to the session — quiet but visibly moved — was a powerful reminder that culture starts at the top, but it lives in the everyday.

A story still unfolding, and what’s next

I come from a culture where sweet things mark meaningful beginnings. In India, you eat a bite of dessert before an

exam, an important meeting, starting a new job, or a wedding — a gentle wish for things to go well.

Before heading to the Türkiye retreat, I had packed a small gift for my teammates. A symbol of thank-you for the team that hired me, onboarded me, and made me feel at home from day one.

So I brought along a small, handmade crocheted bee to share with my teammates. A soft reminder of nectar, and the energy I hoped to bring into this new chapter. Small enough to sit on a shelf, but meaningful enough to say:

Thank you for being part of my Buffer journey!

The crocheted bee I carried as a gift for my hiring team. I call her bee-yonce.
This retreat gave me more than orientation. It gave me

context, connection, and momentum.

I return to my role not just with ideas, but with perspective — a deeper sense of what matters, how we move, and what kind of company I now get to help shape.

I’m still settling in, but I already feel deeply rooted.

I’ll be documenting more of that journey in my 60- and 90-day reflections. But for now, if you’re curious about life at Buffer, or the creator-led brand we’re building from the inside out — I’d love to chat! You can find me on LinkedIn.

https://buffer.com/resources/joined-3-days-before-the-retreat/