



The Retreat Center - Essential Course Information

Arriving and Departing

- On opening day, registration takes place from 3:00 – 6:00 pm. First timers: please arrive by 5:00pm.
- The retreat begins in the early evening, after registration and orientation. You are expected to participate in the entire course – it is not acceptable to leave a retreat early. Such movement is disruptive to other retreatants and places a burden on them with regard to work periods. IMS teachers request that you kindly observe this courtesy.

Retreat Schedule

- A typical daily schedule starts around 5:00am and ends around 10:00pm. The day is spent in silent practice comprising alternate periods of sitting and walking meditation, as well as a one-hour work period. Comprehensive meditation instruction and talks about the Buddha's teachings are offered each day.
- In addition, individual or group interviews with the teachers take place at regular intervals on retreats longer than a weekend.
- The 1-hour daily work period is an opportunity to practice mindfulness in everyday activities, such as chopping vegetables, washing dishes, vacuuming or cleaning the center. This voluntary service helps us to offer our courses at affordable rates.

Noble Silence

- Once the retreat begins, you will be asked to honor 'noble silence' – a quieting of the body and voice that helps cultivate a calm and peaceful retreat environment. Noble silence also encompasses avoiding reading, writing, keeping a journal, receiving mail, using the telephone, or otherwise keeping busy and distracted. By leaving at home the many activities and communications that worldly life entails, you offer yourself the gift of stillness.
- Silence is broken at the end of the retreat, in time to allow you to talk and share your experience with other retreatants.

Five Precepts

While on retreat, all participants undertake the following ethical guidelines:

- To refrain from harming any living, sentient beings – not to kill or intentionally hurt any person or creature, even an insect.
- To refrain from taking what is not freely given – not to steal or 'borrow' without the consent of the giver; to accept what is offered and not try to change it or get more.
- To abstain from sexual activity.
- To practice noble silence and to refrain from harming by one's speech – not to lie, gossip or use harsh or hurtful language.
- To abstain from using alcohol, recreational drugs and other intoxicants that cloud the mind and harm the body. (*This does not apply to prescription medicines.*)

Accommodations

- Bedrooms are small single rooms, simply yet comfortably furnished for each retreatant with a twin bed, sink, closet and chair. A pillow and two blankets are provided. If travel arrangements permit, please bring your own sheets, pillow case, towels, and additional blankets. Camping is not available.
- Whenever possible men and women are assigned different floors. Communal toilet and shower facilities are located on each floor. Some floors are co-ed.

Food

- We serve tasty, varied, nutritious vegetarian meals (including dairy and eggs). Breakfast and lunch are substantial; a lighter meal of soup and bread or crackers is served in the late afternoon. For those with allergies to gluten and/or dairy, a simple, non-animal protein, a gluten-free grain and a plain vegetable are served at lunch.
- For additional dietary requirements, please bring what you need. We do not serve coffee; you may bring your own. We cannot supply specific snacks or utensils.
- Cooking in your room is not permitted.

Medical Conditions

- We supply some first aid materials, in case of common, non-serious ailments or injuries.
- In the event of a medical emergency, IMS will call 911. If an illness requires nursing care, it will be necessary to leave the retreat to recuperate. We suggest that all retreatants have medical insurance or sufficient funds to cover the costs of any medical care that might be required.
- For less urgent conditions, we provide information on local doctors and alternative therapists and ask that you take care of your own appointments and transportation.

Personal Hygiene Products

- Because meditation retreat practice can lead to a heightened sense of awareness, some participants may develop sensitivity to odors and perfumes, and some are allergic to many chemicals. Consider washing any items you bring with unscented laundry detergent and softener before you come. Please do not bring or use perfumes or scented shampoos, ointments or lotions; we suggest that you purchase unscented products before you come, if possible. We stock a small selection of such items that can be purchased on arrival, or during your retreat. Unscented shampoo & conditioner are provided.
- If you are acutely chemically sensitive, please advise our office.

Clothing

- Weather in Massachusetts is extremely variable, so we recommend that you come well prepared, with clothing selected for comfort rather than style. Winters are cold, with rain, snow and ice. Meditation practice can increase your sensitivity to cold. Even for indoor wear, you may appreciate long underwear, light gloves, a cap or scarf, a warm sweater or a shawl, and heavy socks. Summers can be hot; modest, lightweight clothing is the norm, including shorts. Please do not bring clothing made of noise-making, rustling fabrics such as nylon.
- Please bring a sufficient supply of clothing to last the duration of your retreat. Our laundry facilities are available only for hand-washing of clothes.

Smoking and Candles

- Smoking is permitted only in a designated outdoor smoking area.
- Due to fire regulations, we do not allow you to light candles or burn incense, or light fires of any kind on IMS property. The exception to this rule is for the lighting of Shabbat and other religious candles, in an allocated space only (please see the office for details).

Payments

- IMS accepts payment for retreats, as well as any donations, by cash, check or credit card (Visa & MC). We also accept Canadian checks in US currency. Your balance is due prior to your arrival, and you can pay it online (in the meditation retreats section of our website).

What to Bring

Essential

- Indoor shoes (soft soled shoes, such as slippers)
- Sheets, pillowcase, towels (*IMS has a limited supply for those with travel weight restrictions*)
- All necessary special foods and beverages
- Plastic containers for special foods
- Medicines, vitamins, supplements, etc.
- Unscented personal hygiene products (*IMS stocks these items for sale, for those with travel weight restrictions.*)
- Enough clothing for the entire retreat
- Closed-toe shoes for those with a yogi job in the kitchen

Optional

- Extra blankets (winter)
- Cloth napkins
- Extra batteries
- Extra cash/checks
- Watch (Alarm clocks are provided in each room)
- Insect repellent and/or head net (spring and summer)
- Portable fan (summer)
- Your own meditation cushion or bench (*IMS provides mats, cushions and other meditation practice equipment.*)

What not to bring

- Scented personal hygiene products, beeper watches, cell phones, “noisy” clothing (e.g. nylon), candles or incense.

More information is available at our website – please visit www.dharma.org.