

Three-Month, Part 1 & Part 2 – Essential information

The IMS retreat environment, with its simple and nourishing lifestyle, has been developed over the last 40 years to support and enhance your meditation practice. Please keep the spirit of practice in mind, including working with what is offered, as you read through the following information.

Orientation & Transition

- **Opening Day:** Registration takes place from 1:00 - 6:00 pm. First timers: please arrive by 5:00 pm.
- **Orientation for those attending Part 1 and the entire Three-Month course:** The first two days of the retreat are for orientation. Partial silence and work-as-practice periods are interspersed with periods of sitting and walking meditation. This is a time to become familiar with the IMS environment, meet your fellow retreatants and assist the staff to complete preparations for the course. Your participation at this time is vital to our operations. Equally important, the sense of community built during orientation creates a climate of warmth and connection among yogis.
- **Orientation for those attending Part 2:** Please arrive and check-in between 1:00 - 5:00 pm. The center will be in silence, and your orientation period will be brief. A light meal of soup and bread or crackers will be served at 5:00pm.
- **Transition for those attending Part 2 and the entire Three-Month course:** The last few days of the retreat are structured to provide time for reconnecting with other yogis and discussing any transition concerns. This transition period is an essential aspect of the retreat – a special time to prepare for the transition back to the busyness of life. You will also have a chance to purchase books and browse free materials.
- **Transition for those attending Part 1:** The reintegration period at the end of your retreat will be brief. You are encouraged to allow yourself a few free days at home after the course ends, in order to readjust to the pace of daily life. We will offer you a chance to purchase books and browse free materials.

Retreat Schedule

- Full silence begins on the third evening. The Three-Month Retreat follows an intensive daily schedule of detailed meditation instruction, alternate periods of sitting and walking meditation, meals, and an evening talk or guided meditation offered by one of the teachers.
- Individual practice meetings with the teachers take place at regular intervals.

Business and Personal Affairs

- Please take care of any personal and business affairs before the retreat begins or arrange for a friend or associate to do so. IMS office staff cannot perform services such as photocopying, mailing, typing, phone calling, emailing, faxing, catalog ordering, etc.

- We ask that you refer to the enclosed letter from the teachers for their guidelines on Noble Silence.

Personal Hygiene Products

- Because meditation retreat practice can lead to a heightened sense of awareness, some participants may develop a sensitivity to fragrances and perfumes, and some are allergic to many chemicals. Please do not bring or use perfumes or scented shampoos, ointments or lotions; we suggest that you obtain 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, and we provide unscented shampoo and conditioner in all showers.

- If you are acutely chemically sensitive, please advise our office.

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 can harm the body. (This does not apply to prescription medicines.)

Food

- We serve tasty, varied, nutritious vegetarian meals (including dairy and eggs). Breakfast and lunch are substantial; a lighter meal 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 provide coffee or filters, white sugar or hot chocolate; you may bring your own. We cannot supply specific snacks or utensils. We provide a variety of caffeinated and herbal teas.

- Cooking in your room is not permitted.
- There is one refrigerator in the dishwashing area for medical or special needs purposes only, along with limited shelf space to store foods at room temperature.

Medical Conditions

- We supply some basic first aid supplies, in case of common, non-serious ailments or injuries.

- In the event of a medical emergency, IMS will call 911 (emergency services). 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.
- We are not able to provide ongoing transportation. If we need to provide transport for you to pick up medicine or bring you to a medical appointment, you can inquire in the Front Office and a charge to cover our costs will apply.

Smoking and Candles

- Smoking is permitted only in a designated outdoor smoking area, located behind Shanti House.
- Due to fire regulations, do not light candles or burn incense, or light fires of any kind on IMS property. The exception to this rule is the lighting of Shabbat and other religious candles, in the allocated space in the lower walking room. You must be present for the entire time the candles are lit. We provide the candles.

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. For outdoor winter walking, traction equipment for your boots, such as Stabilicers or Yaktrax, is strongly recommended to prevent falls.
- Summers can be hot; modest, lightweight clothing is the norm, including shorts. Please do not bring clothing made of noisy, rustling fabrics such as nylon.

Laundry

- You can do your own laundry once each week. There is a simple sign-up system.
- IMS provides unscented laundry detergent. Small mesh bags are useful for securing socks and underwear. Sometimes, some laundry items are inadvertently lost, so please bring extras, especially underwear.
- The laundry facilities are also available for handwashing of clothes. Please bring your own unscented washing products for handwashing. Please wash the items you bring with unscented laundry detergent prior to arrival.

Accommodations

- Bedrooms are small single rooms, simply and comfortably furnished for each retreatant with a twin bed, sink, closet, chair, and alarm clock. A pillow, two blankets, sheets, pillowcase, and towels are provided. Camping is not available.
- All accommodations are single rooms with locking doors. Bathroom blocks are

located on each floor, and each toilet and shower stall is fully private and lockable.

- If you are disabled, please contact us before arrival to make appropriate arrangements.

Shipping

- If you have too much to carry on the plane, you may ship items to IMS in advance. Please do not send more than two boxes maximum as bedrooms are small and space is limited.

Payments

- IMS is unable to cash personal checks.
- We accept payment for retreats and items for sale, as well as for offering any donations, by cash, check or credit card (Visa, MasterCard & Discover). We also accept Canadian checks in US currency. All balances are due one week prior to your arrival, and you can pay via our website. Select [Pay Your Balance](#) under the Retreats menu on our website.

What to Bring

NOTE: IMS now provides sheets, pillow cases, and towels, as well as blankets. Feel free to bring your own if you'd prefer. Washcloths are not provided. Every bedroom is equipped with a fan and a clock.

Essential:

- Effective masks (surgical or N95/KN95), enough for your entire retreat, unless stated otherwise in our COVID protocols.
- if this guideline still applies at the time of your retreat. See our [COVID-19 Update](#) page for current IMS guidelines.
- Slippers or indoor shoes
- All necessary special foods and beverages
- Medicines, vitamins, supplements, etc.
- A refillable water bottle for drinking water
- Unscented personal hygiene products (IMS stocks these items for sale, for those with travel weight restrictions.)
- Enough clothing for at least one week (see information above regarding laundry facilities).
- November - March: Traction cleats for outdoor shoes, such as Stabilicers or Yaktrax (but please don't wear indoors)

Optional:

- Sleeping bag, extra blankets

- Cloth napkins
- Plastic containers for storing food items
- Extra batteries
- Extra cash/checks
- Watch (cell phone use for this purpose is not permitted). Alarm clocks are provided in all rooms.
- Your own equipment and props to support meditation practice (IMS provides mats, cushions, and a limited supply of benches & other practice equipment.)

What **not** to bring:

- Scented personal hygiene products
- Beeper watches
- “Noisy” clothing (e.g. nylon or with Velcro closures)
- Candles or incense

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at rc@dharma.org or 978-355-4378. We look forward to greeting you in person and welcoming you!