

Info for FR teachers

Updated March 25, 2025

Teaching Theme – You are welcome to offer a particular aspect of the practice and teachings as a theme for your month-long teaching period, especially if you feel that would be valuable for your own students. If you decide to do this, please send us a short proposal of what you have in mind, including the structure, so we can get the Guiding Teachers' blessing.

However, it isn't necessary to have a specific teaching theme for your month, if you prefer to come to the Forest Refuge simply as a visiting teacher, guiding yogis across a range of practice styles, depending on where they're at and what they're interested in.

Affinity Sitzings – They are held one a week for each affinity group, one for the BIPOC community in attendance, and one for the LGBTQAI+ community. The groups are held in silence, apart from the first meeting of the month where short introductions can be made, preferably with a teacher present, and on the last meeting of the month where yogis may share a little about their practice experience that month. While some teachers and yogis may prefer additional affinity group sittings, the Guiding Teachers believe that the Forest Refuge is designed to encourage yogis to become more self-reliant in their practice, and that yogis who wish to practice at the FR will find their practice strengthened by this policy.

The Schedule – For a general month-long, each of the two co-teachers is on for three days a week. For the seventh day, one or the other is on call – this duty alternates between the two teachers.

For the three days each week that you are on, you would offer a reflection during the 8:30am sit each

morning to support yogis' practice throughout the day. At some time that works for you during each of the three days you're on, you'd also offer individual practice meetings (at most, 10 per day). In addition, you would give a dharma talk one evening during those three days.

So over the course of a week, yogis would hear a total of two dharma talks – one from each of you. In addition, they would have two individual meetings – one with each of you.

Usually, there are not group instructions, since yogis are doing a variety of practices depending on where they are. Individual instruction is given during the practice meetings. However, if you wanted to offer something to the whole group, that would be fine.

For a themed month-long, you can establish a daily schedule that best suits what you want to teach. You can also specify that yogis are required to sit the entire month, or at least that preference will be given to those applying for the full month or longer. We should point out, though, that there may be a small handful of yogis who've already been on retreat prior to your arrival, and whose practice style at that point may be unfolding beautifully. In those instances, we ask that you continue to guide them where they are, and not expect them to suddenly shift into something else that may not be so helpful.

Time Off – For a general month-long, you would have a minimum of three days off per week, and sometimes four. Of course, if a yogi is in great distress, you might need to be involved in the situation for some extra time. However, with our two dedicated Retreat Support people on staff, those extreme challenges are much rarer these days. Many teachers find the pace and teaching load much more relaxed at the Forest Refuge than at the Retreat Center.

For a themed month-long, your time off would be up to the demands of whatever schedule you set.

Time Commitment – We ask that you fully commit to your slot, unless there is a sudden, unforeseen family or medical emergency. Dropping out of the schedule for any other reason places undue pressure on everyone involved in finding replacements!

If you are interested in arriving a day early, please check with our office if housing is available. This would allow you to have a “handover” meeting with the previous month's teachers to learn about yogis who are staying on. If this is not possible, many teachers email important information to each other so that the yogis will have a smooth transition. Please stay until the very end of your month. It will give you a chance to give the handover to the incoming teaching team for the next month.

Compensation – Since teacher dana is historically low at the Forest Refuge, IMS offers teachers there a guaranteed minimum of \$6,000 each for the month. If you decide to offer a themed month-long, and if the dana for that is higher than the guaranteed minimum, both teachers would share the excess.

Car Availability – During your time here, you are welcome to drive the car for your personal needs. This a vehicle shared with the staff – a first-come, first-served sign-up system is in place for its use. The car and the sign-up sheet is in the common house at the Teacher’s Village.

Teacher-in-Residence Role – Because of the long-term nature of practice at the Forest Refuge, the Guiding Teachers thought many years ago it would be good to have a Teacher-in-Residence who teaches several months of the year there, providing continuity of instruction and getting to know the yogis in more depth. Caroline Jones, who usually teaches there for 6 - 7 months out of 12 each year, currently holds this role.

Accommodations

- It is fine for partners to accompany teachers.

- Forest Refuge teacher accommodations have queen-size beds.
- For internet, IMS has multiple sources of internet to support reliable connectivity, including fiber optic with cellular failover at the main administrative and office buildings at the Retreat Center (RC) and Forest Refuge (FR) and cable internet at guest housing locations. The Forest Refuge teacher units are equipped with both Wi-Fi and wired connections, allowing for a faster and more stable connection by plugging directly into the wall outlet.

It's important to note that IMS is located in a rural area where outages can occur, particularly during winter storms. While IMS business use takes priority during office hours, livestreaming and other high-bandwidth activities are generally more feasible during off-peak times, when connection speeds at the Forest Refuge teacher units can approach the upper limits of the available service.

- Because some staff and yogis have difficulties around animals, we do not allow pets at either center.