



RETREAT INFORMATION SHEET

About the Centre

The Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre is a non-profit organisation founded for the study and practice of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* (insight meditation) in the tradition of Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma. We are part of the Theravada tradition of Buddhism followed by the peoples of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, as well as by many in western countries. The centre offers retreats of different lengths, from one day and weekend retreats and workshops, to four, nine and up to forty day retreats. All of these are suitable for both new and experienced meditators. Some of the shorter retreats and workshops are structured with beginners in mind.

About retreats

The format of weekend retreats and workshops varies. Workshops are interactive, providing opportunities for questions and group discussion with the teacher. Short retreats are largely held in noble silence, with a similar practice schedule for longer retreats. They may include discussion time, individual or group interviews. Participants are asked to follow a particular practice method being taught on both short and longer retreats. Longer retreats run from 4 to 40 days and afford an opportunity for intensive practice. The whole day is spent in the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation, a systematic training of attention that develops wisdom and purity of mind through insight into the nature of our experience. The schedule includes periods of formal sitting and waking meditation, as well as

mindfulness of daily activities. Retreats are generally held in noble silence. Communication is limited to talking with the teacher in individual or group interviews, or expressing any needs or concerns with staff. Reading, writing and communicating with others in any way (including using mobile phones) is discouraged.

Retreat conduct

A meditation retreat is a challenging undertaking which requires a degree of effort and self-discipline. It provides an opportunity to practise the teachings of the Buddha to cultivate *sīla* (morality or ethics), *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom). The cultivation of *sīla* is fundamental to the practice, as it provides a supportive foundation for developing concentration. All meditators at the centre are asked to follow the five training precepts. These are:

1. To abstain from killing living beings.
2. To abstain from taking what is not given.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. To abstain from dishonest speech
5. To abstain from intoxicants.

Retreats led by ordained teachers (monks or nuns) will usually include a further three training precepts:

6. To abstain from taking food after midday.
7. To abstain from amusements such as singing and dancing, or adornments.
8. To abstain from using high or luxurious beds.

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Accommodation

Accommodation is in single rooms with shared bathroom facilities, and central heating. Women and men stay in separate areas. Mattresses and pillows are provided, but you will need to bring your own bedding. Please be aware that it can be very cold in winter and cold spells are common even in summer, so bring suitable bedding and warm clothes. We have a limited supply of blankets, electric blankets and hot water bottles. Sitting mats, cushions, benches and chairs are provided in the meditation hall, which is centrally heated. The Centre is located on a sloping site and unfortunately is not currently suitable for wheelchair disabled or the frail aged.

Food and catering

We serve nutritious vegetarian food. Meals are served buffet style and the majority of dishes are gluten free. Meals are usually cooked by volunteers or donated, so we are not able to cater to specific dietary requests. However, a simple meal of rice, steamed vegetables and tofu can be prepared for people on restricted diets. There is a visitor's fridge to store supplementary food items but there is no access to cooking facilities.

Retreat costs

BMIMC is a non-profit organisation and our charges cover only the basic costs of running the Centre, including on-going maintenance, heating and utilities.

There is no charge for the teachings, as these are given freely in accordance with the Buddhist tradition. Teachers' travel costs are sometimes covered but teachers are not paid for their teaching or time at the Centre. Generosity or *dāna* is the foundation practice of the Buddhist teachings and we invite students to make an offering directly to their teacher and/or the Centre in addition to the set cost of the retreat. Donations can also be made directly into the building fund, which are tax deductible. If you are unable to pay the full cost of the retreat due to financial circumstances, please feel free to contact BMIMC to discuss a concession.

Booking for a retreat

As the Centre is small, with a maximum capacity of less than 20 students, retreats often book out many months in advance.

To book, please complete and send in an application form (available on the website). We will be in touch within a few days to notify you that you have a place on the retreat. Payment is required within 7 days of this notification.

For retreats up to 4 days: full payment is required upfront.

For retreats exceeding 4 days: \$100 non-refundable deposit taken if booking more than three months in advance. Full payment must be made 3 months prior to retreat commencing.

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Payment can be made by credit card, cheque (made out to *Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre*), or by electronic transfer to our bank account (Westpac BSB 032 826 A/c No 192375)

Once we have received payment we will send you a receipt and a retreat confirmation form that gives more detailed information on what to bring and how to get here.

Cancellation policy

We recognise that people withdraw from retreats for a variety of reasons beyond their control and wherever possible, this is taken into account. However, we are also conscious that people on the waiting list are often unable to fill the available place at short notice. The Centre also incurs costs for unfilled places on retreats. Our cancellation policy therefore encourages an early upfront commitment to attend courses once booking has been made.

Cancellation fees are as follows:

- For Courses up to 4 days: Prior to 2 weeks before retreat, payment is refunded less a \$100 cancellation fee. No refund is given for cancellations made less than two weeks before retreat.
- For courses exceeding 4 days: if cancelling more than 30 days prior to the retreat, 75% is refunded. If cancelling within 30 days of the retreat, no refund is given.

There are no refunds or discounts for early departure or late commencement.