



BLUE MOUNTAINS INSIGHT MEDITATION CENTRE

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COURSE INFORMATION (revised 15 April 2002)

About the Centre

Thank you for your enquiry about attending a workshop or retreat at Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre. The Centre is a non-profit organisation founded for the study and practice of *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* (insight meditation) in the tradition of the late Mahāsi Sayādaw of Burma. We are part of the Theravāda tradition of Buddhism, the tradition followed by the peoples of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, as well as by many in western countries.

The Centre offers a variety of different courses, varying in length from one day and weekend introductory workshops, to four, nine, sixteen and thirty day retreats. The shorter courses are designed for beginners. If you are new to meditation we suggest that you begin with a one day or weekend workshop before considering a longer retreat. Experienced meditators may also find it useful to renew their understanding of the basics of meditation by attending an introductory workshop.

About the courses

Introductory workshops: Workshops run for one or two days and no prior experience of Buddhism or meditation is required. They are therefore suitable for beginners or experienced meditators who wish to refresh their understanding. A two day workshop would normally be in silence for the second day. Typically a full day would begin at 6.30 a.m. and finish at 9.30 p.m., and include opportunities for group discussion of any issues that arise from meditation practice.

Retreats: Retreats can run for two, four, nine, sixteen or thirty days. Retreats are conducted in silence, which includes no talking (including no use of mobile phones), no communicating through body language, no listening to music, no reading, and no writing except for brief notes recording your meditation experience. However, there are opportunities to discuss the practice with the teacher through individual consultations or group discussions. A typical retreat day begins at 5 a.m. and ends at 10 p.m., with a rest period in the middle of the day. The whole day is spent practising sitting and walking meditation, cultivating continuous attention to the changing

nature of our moment-to-moment experience. In addition, meditators will be assigned a daily housekeeping job to assist with the running of the retreat. This work is also part of the practice.

Course conduct

A meditation retreat is a serious undertaking which requires effort and self-discipline. A retreat is not a chance to escape the pressures of daily life, nor a means of overcoming a psychological crisis, nor time out in which to do your own thing. Rather, it is an opportunity to cultivate the Buddha's way of liberation through the practice of generosity, ethics, meditation and understanding. Walking this path, we can learn to abandon actions of body, speech and mind that bring suffering to ourselves and those around us, and cultivate actions that bring happiness to ourselves and those around us.

The cultivation of *sīla*, or ethics, is fundamental to the practice, as it helps the student to develop a foundation of concentration and provides a conducive environment for meditation. All meditators at the Centre follow the five training precepts. These are:

1. To abstain from killing living beings (including insects).
2. To abstain from taking what is not given.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct (which in the Centre means abstention from all sexual activity).
4. To abstain from dishonest speech.
5. To abstain from intoxicants.

Courses led by ordained teachers (monks or nuns) will usually include an extra three training precepts:

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

Accommodation and food

Accommodation at present is bunk style in separate dormitories for men and women, with a maximum of eight beds to a room. Mattresses and pillows are provided; you will need to bring your own bedding. Sitting mats, cushions, benches and chairs are provided in the meditation hall.

We serve vegetarian food, with the main meal of the day at lunchtime. Unless the retreat is an eight precept one, a light supper is served in the evening. Meals are often cooked by volunteers or donated, and so generally we are not able to cater for special diets.

Course costs

The Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre is a non-profit organisation, and our charges cover only our expenses in running courses. They do not include any charge for the teachings, which are given freely in accordance with Buddhist tradition. As teachers are not paid for their teachings, they rely on the generosity of their students for their livelihood. Similarly, the Centre relies on donations to cover its ongoing maintenance and building programmes. Generosity, or *dāna*, is the foundation practice of the Buddha's way of liberation, so we encourage students to make an offering to their teacher and/or the Centre in addition to the set course cost.

An offering to the Centre could be in the form of volunteer labour, for example as a cook or cook's assistant during a retreat. Volunteers receive one free meditation day for each day they work, so if for example you assisted for a weekend workshop, you could attend a weekend workshop for free in the future.

If you feel unable to attend a course due to financial circumstances, please contact the Centre to discuss the availability of spaces on our scholarship fund.

How to book for a course

Note: as the Centre is small, with a maximum capacity of less than 20 students, please book as far in advance as possible to make sure you don't miss out. Courses held over weekends and public holiday periods tend to be booked out many weeks in advance.

Please first check with us that there is a place available in the course you're interested in. If the course is full, we can put you on a waiting list to be notified in case any cancellations come up.

If a place is available, you will then need to complete the course registration form and send it to us with a deposit to confirm your place. The

deposit can be paid by cheque or money order (made out to *Buddha Sasana Association of Australia*), or over the phone by credit card.

Deposit amounts required: \$50 for one day workshops; \$100 for courses of a weekend or longer; or \$25 (refundable) for dana retreats, or if you are using your volunteer cooking days to 'pay' for the course. The \$25 deposit will be refunded to you at the start of the course. If you don't attend the course it will be added to our scholarship fund.

When we have received your registration form and deposit we will send you a receipt and a course confirmation form which will give you more detailed information on what to bring and how to get here.

The balance of the course cost (if any) is payable on the first day of the workshop or retreat.

Cancellation fees

Please give us as much notice as possible if you need to cancel your booking, so that we can offer your place to another student.

Your deposit is **fully refundable** up to **two weeks** before the commencement of the workshop or retreat.

Cancelling your place two weeks before a course starts incurs a 25% fee; one week before it starts incurs a 50% fee; and cancelling less than one week before a course begins results in loss of deposit.

No refund will be given if a student chooses to leave a course early, except in emergencies. Your course fee will be donated to the scholarship fund, after our operating expenses have been deducted from it. The scholarship fund provides course opportunities for financially disadvantaged students.

Remember if you do leave early that there were probably several people on the waiting list who could have done the course in your place, who have missed out. Out of consideration for them as well as yourself, please try to make a commitment to attend the **whole** course.

Contact details

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us during office hours, Monday to Friday, on (02) 4788 1024.

We hope to see you soon at the Blue Mountains Insight Meditation Centre.

Kind regards - the managers