



BODHI TREE FOREST MONASTERY & COMMUNITY ACCESS RETREAT CENTRE

COURSE INFORMATION

- ABOUT THE CENTRE

Thank you for your enquiry about attending a course at Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery and Retreat Centre. The Centre is a non-profit charitable 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 Theravāda tradition of Buddhism, the tradition followed by the peoples of Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, as well as by many in western countries.

Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery and Retreat Centre is on ninety five acres, five minutes north of Lismore in the Rainbow Region of Northern NSW near Byron Bay. The property has a permanent creek fed by fresh water springs, rock pools, substantial pockets of remnant rainforest as well as lush rolling green fields. We share the property with kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, platypus, echidnas, turtles, goannas and water dragons, which are all common sights around Bodhi Tree. A large array of birdlife from the small azure kingfishers and blue wrens, to the colourful king parrots and crimson rosellas, the large wedge-tailed eagles and black cockatoos, and the water birds: herons and cranes can also be found.

The Centre offers a variety of different courses, varying in length from one day and weekend introductory workshops, to ten, and occasionally twenty and thirty day intensive retreats, as well as the potential for longer term accommodation for meditators willing to assist with the running of the centre. The shorter courses are designed for beginners and intermediate practitioners. 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 insight meditation by attending an introductory workshop.

- ABOUT THE COURSES

Introductory Workshops: Workshops run for one or two days and no prior experience of meditation is required. Full instruction in the practice is given by the teacher. They are therefore suitable for beginners or experienced meditators who wish to refresh their basic understanding. A one-day workshop would normally be done in silence. The day would begin at 9:00 a.m. and finish around 5:00 p.m., and include opportunities for group discussion of any issues that arise from meditation practice, as well as a chance for a one on one interview with the teacher.

Vipassana Retreats: Residential retreats can run for two, ten or twenty days. Retreats are conducted in silence, which includes no talking (including no use of mobile phones or email), 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 around 6 am (depending upon the teacher this may be 4:30 am) and ends around 9 pm, 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. There is also a Dhamma Talk every evening. 10 day retreats start on the Friday at 5:30pm and finish the following Sunday around 4pm.

Long Term Retreats: We hope to one day be able to offer serious Vipassana meditators the chance to conduct long term self-retreats at Bodhi Tree in a kuti (meditation hut) in the forest with meals fully catered for, maximizing the time the meditator can commit to the intensive practice free of distractions. At present, positions frequently become available for experienced meditators to live and work at the centre. Long Term retreatants provide a much needed service such as gardening or cooking in exchange for accommodation and food and the opportunity to deepen their practice at Bodhi Tree with the ability to consult with an experienced teacher on a daily basis.

- **COURSE CONDUCT**

A meditation retreat is a serious undertaking which requires effort and self-discipline. A retreat is not merely 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 practice. Rather, it is a unique opportunity to cultivate the Buddha's way of liberation first taught two and a half thousand years ago 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 true happiness to ourselves and those around us.

The cultivation of *sila*, or ethics, is fundamental to the practice, as it allows the student to develop a firm foundation of concentration, from which insight and understanding can mature, and provides a conducive environment for meditation. All meditators at the Centre follow the five basic Buddhist precepts.

The five basic Buddhist precepts are:

1. To abstain from intentionally killing or harming living beings.
2. To abstain from taking what is not given or offered.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct (abstention from all sexual activity on retreat).
4. To abstain from dishonest or harsh speech (noble silence while on retreat).
5. To abstain from intoxicants that clouds the mind.

The five basic Buddhist precepts expressed in positive terms:

1. To act with compassion and loving-kindness towards all sentient beings.
2. To be open hearted and generous.
3. To practice stillness, simplicity, contentment and self-restraint.
4. To speak with truth, clarity and peace.
5. To live with mindfulness.

- **ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD**

Accommodation at present is bunk style in dorm rooms separated for men and women. Some meditators may stay in tents or campervans. Mattresses, pillows and blankets are provided. Sitting mats, cushions and chairs are also provided in the meditation hall – although most meditators find it beneficial to bring their own equipment, particularly meditation stools. Ear plugs can also be beneficial for light sleepers.

The Centre is located on 95 acres in a semi-rural setting, and unfortunately is not currently suitable for wheelchair or disabled access, or for the very frail elderly.

We serve simple, healthy, predominantly organic, vegetarian food, with the main meal of the day at lunchtime. Most retreats will also have a light supper served in the evening. Meals are often cooked by volunteers or donated, and due to the large numbers to be catered for, we are generally able to cater for special dietary requirements.

- **CHECKLIST OF WHAT TO BRING**

A list of items to bring: Sheets or Sleeping Bag, Pillow Case, Towel, Torch, Insect Repellent, Sunscreen, Personal Medicines or Vitamins, Hat, Umbrella, Slip On Shoes or Sandals, Watch/Clock with Alarm, Personal Meditation Cushion or Stool (optional), Notepad and Pen, Toiletries, Ear Plugs, Water Bottle, Appropriate Clothing (modest, quiet, comfortable and warm or cool depending upon the season – nights can get cold in winter).

- **COURSE COSTS**

All courses at Bodhi Tree are run on a *dana* (donation) basis.

The Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery and Retreat Centre is run by monks and volunteers as a part of the Buddha Dhamma Education Association, a non-profit organisation which also runs the website www.buddhanet.net. All of our expenses and running costs are covered by generous donations. They do not include any charge for the teachings, which are given freely in accordance with the Buddhist tradition. As the monks and teachers are not paid for their teachings and guidance, they rely solely on the generosity of their students for their livelihood and basic requirements. Similarly, the Centre relies on donations to cover its ongoing maintenance and future building programs.

Generosity, or *dana*, is the foundation practice of the Buddha's way of liberation, and helps to break the mind's tendency toward attachment. So we encourage students to make an offering to their teacher and/or the Bodhi Tree Centre. An offering to the Centre could also be in the form of volunteer labour, for example as a cook or cook's assistant during the retreat, cleaning, general maintenance of equipment, or maintaining the property itself, requisites for the monks, or covering grocery bills and food for the retreat.

- As we are often asked what a suitable donation might be, in the end this is always up to the meditator, however an amount, to at least cover your share of our costs and provide some sort of donation to the teacher and monks would be considered very kind and generous. Generally it costs Bodhi Tree about \$25 per person per day and an offering to the monks and teacher is entirely up to you – the important thing is the act of giving.

- **HOW TO BOOK FOR A COURSE**

As the Centre is small, with a maximum capacity of about 20 students in the dormitories, please book as far in advance as possible to avoid disappointment. Some retreats during peak times are very busy while others, at non-peak times, generally still have a few last minute places left.

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 to confirm your place.

- **CANCELLATION**

As we do not charge a deposit and rely on donations, there have been instances in the past of yogis abusing this tradition, either by not turning up at all, or cancelling at the last minute. This causes the centre many problems both with the ordering of food quantities, as well as the organisation of other yogis to fill the vacancy at the last minute.

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, or amend catering requirements. Remember if you do leave early, there were probably several people on the waiting list who could have done the course in your place. Out of consideration for them, as well as your own practice, please 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 on (02) 6628 2426 or webmaster@buddhanet.net or write to: Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery and Retreat Centre, 78 Bentley Road, Tullera NSW 2480, Australia.

We hope to see you soon, and wish you an enjoyable stay at the Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery and Retreat Centre.

With metta and best wishes,

Ven Pannyavaro (Resident teaching monk)