

# **The Mountain Hermitage**

## **Twenty-Day Vipassana Retreat for Experienced Practitioners**

**with Sayadaw U. Vivekananda**

**May 6 - 26, 2025**

**at Hyperslow Retreat Center @ San Geronimo Lodge, Taos, NM**

### **PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

*The Mountain Hermitage* offers this unique opportunity for qualified individuals who wish to undertake twenty days of intensive *Vipassana* practice under the guidance of Venerable Sayadaw U. Vivekananda.

#### **MONASTIC RETREAT GUIDELINES**

This will be a monastic retreat. This means that retreatants will be asked to adhere to the Eight Precepts for the period of the retreat. In accordance with the Sixth Precept, only two meals a day will be served: breakfast and a noon lunch. No food may be taken after lunch. Fruit juice or non-caffeinated tea may be taken after the noon hour. Please indicate on your registration form if you have any specific medical needs regarding taking food in the early evening.

Retreatants are also asked to dress respectfully, meaning no shorts or sleeveless shirts. Mid-calf length pants or skirts are acceptable. Laundry will be done a few times during the retreat. More information will be given as we get closer to the retreat.

#### **EXPECTATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS**

- Adherence to the ethical guidelines of the Eight Precepts (see below)
- A commitment to use all activities of the day as opportunities for practice
- Maintenance of silence by refraining from verbal and written communication
- Sustained and continuous practice
- A commitment to being fully at the retreat, with no outside activities
- Completion of a daily work meditation
- Participation in scheduled daily practice interviews
- Participation in the retreat schedule as set by the teacher
- All practitioners must have sat three or more 7-10 day retreats or a retreat of a month or longer.

#### **ETHICAL GUIDELINES**

We ask that you abide by the eight traditional Buddhist precepts for lay practitioners while at this retreat:

1. I undertake the training to refrain from harming living creatures. I undertake the training to practice compassionate action.
2. I undertake the training to refrain from taking that which is not given. I undertake the training to practice contentment.
3. I undertake the training to refrain from sexual activity. I undertake the training to practice responsibility in all my relationships.
4. I undertake the training to refrain from harmful speech. I undertake the training to practice noble silence.
5. I undertake the training to refrain from the use of intoxicants. I undertake the training to care for my body and my mind
6. I undertake the training to refrain from eating at the wrong times. I undertake the training to practice eating simply for nourishment and to sustain the energy to practice the Dhamma.
7. I undertake the training to refrain from entertainments, beautifications and adornments. I undertake the training to keep the mind and heart undistracted and clearly focused on practicing the Dhamma.
8. I undertake the training to refrain from sitting or lying on a high or luxurious seat or bed. I undertake the training to use only what is truly needed to rest the body and stay alert for the practice of the Dhamma.

## **NOBLE SILENCE**

After registration and orientation you will enter the silent space of the intensive retreat environment. The buildings and grounds are in silence at all times, apart from staff working and living areas. Yogis are also asked not to read, write, or keep a journal other than for the purpose of practice reports to the teachers.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD**

The experience of being on retreat is a rare opportunity for silence and solitude. All personal and business obligations must therefore be taken care of prior to arrival.

## **WORK MEDITATION**

As part of your intensive retreat practice, you will be asked to engage in mindful work practice. The work will consist of one hour a day at tasks such as helping in meal service, washing dishes, cleaning bathrooms and shower facilities, sweeping outside walkways and porches, etc. This work meditation, a form of service,

is also vital: it enables us to maintain relatively low retreat fees, and it allows you the opportunity to practice mindfulness in daily activities.

## DANA

DANA, an ancient *Pali* word meaning generosity, giving, or gift, is central to the 2,600-year-old tradition of Buddhism. The teachings of the Buddha have been offered freely since the time of the Buddha. There was and is no way to put a price on the teachings of the truth - they are valuable beyond any fee one could set.

The early teachers received no payment for their instruction. In Buddhist countries, traditionally, it has always been understood that the lay community, through their voluntary generosity (their *dana*), provide physical support - the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and medicine - for the monks and nuns. In turn they were/are offered guidance and teachings in their own practice by this monastic *sangha*. This practice of *dana* has been a very significant pillar in keeping the *Dhamma* (teachings) alive. The generosity of the laity towards the practical support of the monastic community since ancient times, is what has kept the *Dhamma* spreading through the world.

Western teachers have continued this tradition of offering the teachings freely. In our culture, where no real training exists in living generously, it is a new practice for us in both offering and receiving the *Dhamma*.

*Dana* is not only a practical matter; it also plays a crucial role in the spiritual life of a dharma practitioner. Generosity is the first of the ten *paramis*, or qualities of character, to be perfected in spiritual life. The very act of giving is of immeasurable benefit to the giver, for it opens the heart, lessens self-absorption, and serves the well-being of others.

*The Mountain Hermitage* fees for this retreat only cover basic expenses and operating costs. The teachers offer the *Buddha Dhamma* without any set fee, and totally depend of the generosity of students for the support of their daily life needs. Supporting the teachers' work, from the heart, however it feels appropriate, is the practice of *Dana*. You may also wish to offer *dana* to the staff, or to the *Hermitage* itself to support operating expenses or future scholarships.

As is done in Asian monasteries, another way to support the work of the *Hermitage* is to offer *dana* to cover the cost of a meal or a full day's food for everyone during the retreat.

**HOW TO MAKE AN OFFERING:** At the end of the retreat, *dana* envelopes will be provided. Please clearly designate on the outside of the envelope who your *dana* is to be directed to. All *dana* checks should be made out to *The Mountain Hermitage* with a clearly written designation on the envelope who the *dana* is for. *The Mountain Hermitage* is 501(c)(iii) tax-deductible charitable organization. *Dana* checks made out to *The Mountain Hermitage* and intended for the teachers are tax deductible. *Dana* checks for staff are not tax deductible. *Dana* to support the work of Sayadaw Vivekananda will be passed along to his Retreat Center in Lumbini. You are welcome to mail *dana* to the *Hermitage* for teachers, staff, scholarships, and *The Mountain Hermitage* itself anytime.

## MEDICAL ISSUES

All participants must be mentally stable and physically able to care for themselves. Everyone must have health insurance or be able to cover his/her own expenses in case of illness or medical emergencies. Any special needs must be discussed with *The Mountain Hermitage* administrative assistant and the retreat manager and agreed to in advance. Should medical needs or emergencies arise, the retreat manager will offer assistance.