

Three Year Retreat At Karmé Ling Retreat Center

People wishing to undertake the traditional Three Year Retreat must first get permission to do the retreat from the Retreat Master. This can be obtained in an interview.

All the retreat practices are done in Tibetan and there are no transliterated texts. Retreatants need to be able to read Tibetan quickly before they come to the pre-retreat training. If you can read a side of a Tibetan page in a minute you will be okay. In the best case, full comprehension of Tibetan would be excellent. If that is not possible, then knowledge of basic literary Tibetan vocabulary and a basic grasp of grammar would be very helpful. Though comprehension is not required, the more you understand the better. Certainly, should there be more candidates than spaces in retreat, those who have made the effort to learn Tibetan will probably be in a better position to gain entrance to retreat than someone who has made no such effort.

Retreatants are responsible for raising the retreat fees. The current fee for a Three Year Retreat is \$36,000. There is an additional charge of \$1,000 for the two month pre-retreat. The retreat fees must be paid in by the end of the retreat. The fee pays for your room and food for the entire three years and three months of the retreat. It also covers the cost of the texts you will need and the transcripts of the teachings. You will need to pay for your daily offerings and for part of the cost of translations of texts purchased from outside Karmé Ling Retreat Center. This will amount to another \$200 to \$300 over the retreat. You may also want some money to offer to visiting lamas who come to the retreat occasionally.

You will be wearing the robes of a monk/nun for the entire retreat. You will be supplied robes during the pre-retreat period. You will need to bring cloths only for the pre-retreat period. You should also bring any pictures and statues you have for your personal shrine in your room. If you have a Bell, Dorje, Dhamaru, Mandala plates, etc you should bring them. If you don't have them, they will be supplied. At different times during retreat you will need to set up three sets of offerings in your room, the bowls are supplied, but you will need to supply the offerings. Retreatants sleep in their meditation boxes at night so don't need sheets. You will want pillows and padding for sleeping in your box. You may want to bring a small dresser and a small set of bookshelves for your room. The rooms are small, 10 x 10 feet, so you don't have much space in your room for extra stuff. There may be a little space in unused rooms, but don't count on much. During the retreat, the cook can do some personal shopping for you. Be aware that it gets to -10° f (-20° c) during the winter here and there can be a foot of snow on the ground in the morning. As Chopon, you will need to take offerings out in winter

The day starts at 4 AM with a three and a half hour Thün (meditation session). This is followed by a 45 minute breakfast break. After breakfast is group practice for about an hour and a half. The second Thün that lasts until lunch follows this. The lunch break is an hour and 45 minutes. The lunch break is the only time of the day in which talking is allowed. After lunch is third Thün, this lasts until 4:15. The group practice of Mahakala follows this and takes a bit over an hour. There is a dinner break until fourth Thün at 6:45. Fourth Thün is two and a half hours, after which is a short practice that takes another 20 minutes. There is ten

minutes between sessions to allow you to go to the bathroom. The cook supplies breakfast and lunch, but retreatants get their own dinners if any.

You will need to arrive at Karmé Ling about two months prior to the beginning of the retreat for the pre-retreat training period. During the pre-retreat you will learn to play all the Tibetan instruments. You will also be taught how to be Ümze (the chant master who leads group practices), Chopon (shrine attendant) and all the other skills needed to do the retreat. The teaching of the daily retreat practices is also done during the pre-retreat. The schedule for the pre-retreat is similar to the schedule of the retreat itself. Instead of Thüns you have classes. At some point prior to the retreat you will need to receive all the empowerments for the practices you will do in retreat. The date for this will be announced several months before the pre-retreat.

During retreat you will not be allowed to use the phone or to see any one outside of your retreat. The only exceptions to this are visiting Lamas and medical emergencies. There is a fence around each building that keeps people from seeing you and you from seeing people. You may walk around the building during breaks, but you may not go outside the fence for the three year three month period. There is fax machine in each building for your use. It is best if you can reduce all communications to the outside to a minimum.

For more information call, email or write to:

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