

Land of Calm Abiding

Meditators' Guidelines and Agreement

(Pre-registration)

Welcome to Land of Calm Abiding

We rejoice that you have made the commitment to follow in the footsteps of Buddha Shakyamuni and all the great masters who attained enlightenment by training the body/mind in Buddha's methods of contemplation in solitude.

Land of Calm Abiding is a very blessed and wonderful quiet place for meditation, and is for people who wish to do long-term isolated retreat. These retreats may last from several months, to many years, to a lifetime. This facility is extremely rare; its unique physical attributes are difficult to find anywhere on this planet. Most people have a blissful and productive experience here; however, please be careful and don't push yourself. **Retreat is not like normal activities, we can't force the mind to evolve.** As Lama Yeshe said, growing enlightenment is very organic.

In order to preserve the sacred energy of A Land of Calm Abiding, we ask that all visitors join us in pledging to observe the following precepts to make your stay as peaceful and enjoyable as possible.

- I will avoid killing any living being, including mosquitoes.
- I will avoid taking what is not freely given.
- I will avoid sexual activity.
- I will avoid deliberately lying to anyone.
- I will avoid intoxicants such as alcohol and recreational drugs.

Land of Calm Abiding is a non-smoking facility. In addition, out of thoughtfulness for our guests who have sensitivities to scents, please refrain from wearing strong perfume during your stay.

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GUIDELINES FOR SOLITARY RETREAT

The following guidelines are the result of conversations with our holy Gurus Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche and Venerable Ribur Rinpoche, as well as several people who have been in, or are in long term isolated retreats. The general consensus is that meditators should be given the very best opportunity to be in isolation, not to be distracted from their practices by outside influences or circumstances. In essence, to be "in retreat."

Living in solitary retreat is not easy for most people. This is not a path for the fainthearted. You must be prepared to work through physical, emotional and spiritual hardships that will most likely arise in your retreat. The closest experience of solitary retreat in modern society is perhaps like a medical student's residency, or an athlete's training for the Olympics. It does take great inner strength and endurance. However, pushing yourself beyond your capacity is detrimental and you must be very careful to take it easy, and be kind to yourself. Enter into a longer retreat slowly, go for walks, visit with the staff and gradually get used to being alone.

For people for who are not yet seasoned meditators, we ask you first to gain experience participating in group retreats, and do some (short) solitary retreats.

For your first stay at A Land Of Calm Abiding, we strongly suggest a one-month retreat to see if you are ready for longer solitary retreat. After one month, you will meet with the director or spiritual director to discuss your experience, and to agree together whether you are ready to stay here for a longer time. Alternatively, you may wish to evaluate your first month by corresponding with your spiritual teacher and have him or her write us a short letter confirming that it is beneficial for you to continue your retreat. If all parties are in agreement that longer retreat is viable, after a three to six month period has elapsed, your progress will be assessed in a follow-up meeting with our director (and, if you wish, correspondence with your spiritual teacher).

EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES

If you are experiencing difficulties, such as an agitated mind that can't relax, insomnia, strange pains, or a negative mind, write a note to let the Director know, and we will do what we can to assist you. There are experienced meditators living on the land who are willing to offer advice to those who seek it. You are welcome to make an appointment via the Director to see one of them. Please go through the correct channels and address your request for help via a note to the Director. Do not leave notes for other meditators or ask them for help directly, unless there is an emergency. Please do not seek counseling from volunteers or the Director; these individuals cannot be expected to have the skills to help you.

We have seen meditators get into trouble when they try too hard at solitary retreat. This protects your personal welfare and also helps us to use our time and the facility in the most beneficial way possible.

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REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING HERE AT LAND OF CALM ABIDING

Please remember that in order to live here, it is required you have taken formal refuge vows, are under the guidance of a qualified meditation master, and abide by the ten virtues and the level of Pratimoksa vows that you have taken. **All those visiting or living here on the land are required to live within the five basic precepts.** The five precepts are not to kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie, or take intoxicants. Intoxicants including alcohol, marijuana, psychedelics and tobacco, are not allowed here. A Land of Calm Abiding reserves the right to ask you to leave if you violate any of these precepts, or engage in any activity that threatens the safety or well being of staff, volunteers or other residents.

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COMMUNICATING WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Kyabje Ribur Rinpoche advised retreaters, ideally, to limit your mail to once a month (maximum). Ribur Rinpoche also commented that even shopping lists and receiving groceries could cause a great distraction to the mind. To minimize distraction, we do not permit retreaters to use email for any purpose, not even to communicate with spiritual teachers. If you feel the need to check in regularly with your teacher, you can write a note on plain paper, and give it to the caretaker who will scan it and email it to your teacher. We will print out the reply and bring it to you. (We will not read it.)

We wish to support you in your communication with your spiritual guide. We also realize that there are specific reasons when the need arises to use the email. Please check with the Director.

You are here to do retreat, so you are expected to stay in retreat and not come and go on social trips or come out to chat with the volunteers, etc. Taking solitary walks is one helpful method for combating 'cabin fever' and getting some fresh air and exercise.

If you are here on an extended stay of over 6 months, then it is acceptable to leave for teachings when your teacher comes to USA, especially if they recommend you do that.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama is in Los Angeles or San Francisco Bay Area, there may be a group of people from the land going and we can help you to get there.

USE OF INTERNET AND LIBRARY

Internet use is only available to you in the case of an emergency, or at the end of retreat to make transportation arrangements. If there are times that you need to communicate with your teacher and/or family please let the office know and we can arrange for you to be here with no one around.

There are also Dharma resources available in the Main House library. We suggest that you familiarise yourself with this library on your arrival, and make a list of the books you might like to read. There is a list of all of the books in your retreat house for your information. You may request a text in the library on your shopping lists, and return it when done. Should you wish to come down to the library in person, send a note, and we will arrange a time for you when there is no one around.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IN SOLITARY RETREAT

Ribur Rinpoche suggested that the meditators live in solitude, (i.e., not see other people on a regular or daily basis).

Based on the advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, it is the policy of Land of Calm Abiding that nuns and monks in solitary retreat live separately. The same applies for laymen and women to live separately while in solitary retreat. Therefore, ordained Sangha and laypersons alike shall not have another person in co-habitation, nor in the immediate vicinity of their cabin.

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COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Kyabje Ribur Rinpoche suggested that meditators might benefit from coming together twice a month for tea and discussion of their retreat and dharma questions. This is not mandatory and is offered only for those wanting to participate.

Since Land of Calm Abiding regularly does Lama Choepa, with *tsog*, in the evenings on the Tibetan calendar of the 10th and 25th each month, meditators are invited to

come. Afterwards, if they wish, they can speak to each other to discuss issues of retreat and dharma questions. Again, this is not mandatory; it is an option open to those wishing to participate. Prior to each *tsog* day, we will send notes to retreaters to remind them of this opportunity along with details of the precise meeting time and place.

Living totally isolated can be very beneficial, but if it is too great a hardship, then it is good to speak with a volunteer or request to speak to another meditator, within reason of course, and as long as it does not disturb anyone. If you would prefer to meet with other retreaters only, you can check with them, via notes through the caretaker, to see if they would also like to meet with a retreator once a month, and you can make those arrangements yourself. Some retreaters may not wish to do that, but some might find it helpful, so you can check.

If you are having serious difficulties with solitude, then please write a note to the Director and we will make an appointment to discuss this matter with you. A possible option open to you could be to cut short your retreat and instead sign up on our volunteer program. This would necessitate vacating your retreat cabin and moving down to join the community of volunteers living in the valley.

SHOPPING BI-MONTHLY

Before you start your retreat, please work out how you will pay for your bimonthly shopping. Most people keep cash in their retreat house; or use their debit card. The volunteers who shop for you are happy to buy food for you, but may not have time to shop for other things. Please bring everything you think you will need; refer to the 'what to bring' letter that was sent to you at the time your application was accepted.

LAUNDRY

We do not do laundry for you, but we may wash your sheets periodically if able. Please inform us and we will arrange this when there is a planned laundry trip. Use only eco-friendly detergents, cleaning products, dish soap and personal care products while you are here. Land of Calm Abiding is in a wilderness area and we wish to support and respect the eco-system here.

PROPANE USE

Please, be mindful of your propane use. The heaters are to be used only when necessary. Wear sweaters, housecoats, and slippers in cool weather. Use warm bedding so you can turn off the heater at night. **Propane gas can cause ill effects to some people**, so during and after cooking your food, we strongly advise you to ventilate the cabin. Turn the gas off on the stove at the pipe valve entry when not in use. Refer to the cabin manual, and make sure you are thoroughly briefed by the caretaker before starting your retreat on using the appliances.

The propane tanks are usually filled once a year in August.

EMERGENCIES

We realize that circumstances arise when a person in (long or short) retreat must depart for a period of time. A family emergency may arise, or one may need to have direct consultation with their primary teacher. In such circumstances, it is important to communicate directly with the LCA staff. It is essential to coordinate with the staff and Director in such circumstances, otherwise your absence will be considered abandonment of your cabin, and it may be made available to another meditator.

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CARE OF YOUR RETREAT HOUSE

The retreat cabins here are very simple and basic, but should be clean and in good working order when you move in. If you notice any basic maintenance or cleanliness issues on your arrival, please notify the Director, we will do our best to address them. **Each cabin comes with its own user manual.** Please read it carefully and check with the caretakers on your first day to make sure you understand how to use and maintain the solar power and the gas appliances, how the note/shopping system works, what to do with your garbage, compost and recycling. It is also essential that you fully comprehend our emergency procedures.

Misuse of the cabins' solar power systems can result in costly damage to the batteries in particular. We will hold retreaters financially responsible for replacing damaged equipment (beyond normal use).

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ADDITIONAL WORK ON YOUR RETREAT HOUSE

If there is a problem with the basic conditions in your cabin, please inform the Director before you start your retreat. You may be allowed to improve them if it is appropriate, at your expense. This is an opportunity for you to practice generosity by making an offering to Land of Calm Abiding. If you do not have the skills to make the improvements you wish to make, we may be able to help, but this is not guaranteed. Any work performed must be completed before starting your retreat.

The Director must approve all work. Work that produces noise may only be performed between 12pm and 3pm. If there are no other retreaters in residence, allowed work hours may be adjusted by arrangement with the Director.

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LEAVING YOUR RETREAT HOUSE

You are responsible for any damage to the cabin beyond normal wear and use, and are expected to pay for it. When you leave Land of Calm Abiding, please do not leave any of your personal belongings behind. Unused food and useful household items may be donated, but please notify us ahead of time so we can determine if they are needed or appropriate. The houses are to be kept clean and dry during your stay, and when you leave, please make sure the cabin is ready for a new resident. We will inspect the house before you leave. Please be mindful that these houses belong to Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche so please take care of them as if Rinpoche lived there with you.

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In General

You are the manager of your retreat experience. We cannot take responsibility for your state of mind during your visit here, but we will do our best to support you in whatever way we can. We sincerely wish you the very best of experiences, and rejoice in your efforts on the path towards Enlightenment. May you enjoy every auspiciousness in your retreat.

NOTE: *Land of Calm Abiding is a place for advanced Dharma practitioners with a history of extensive practice and service to the Dharma. We adhere to the laws of*

karma cause and effect where what we experience is the result of our own past actions. We do not blame others for our experience, but take responsibility for our own mental state. We take responsibility for our own karma created in beginning-less lives and its subsequent manifestation in our current state of mind and experience. During your time at Land of Calm Abiding you are expected to live by this profound realization.

At-will residence

California is an “at will employment” state. This means that at anytime and without cause an employee or Land of Calm Abiding may terminate the employer/employee or accommodation relationship without cause. There is no expressed or implied contract between Land of Calm Abiding and any employee or resident that guarantees or suggests a promise of continued employment or accommodation. When an employee or resident is terminated we will talk with the employee and/or resident to ascertain if there is safe accommodation for them off the land. If not, then if it is determined that the employee or resident is not going to affect emotional and physical health of anyone at the center, then a period of time to be discussed and approved by the Director will begin. If an employee quits their position without notice it is required that they leave the center their last day of work. When any persons, staff, work-study, or ordained Sangha member comes to stay at Land of Calm Abiding it is verified in writing that the person understand that they may be asked to leave the center for the good of the many.

Land of Calm Abiding reserves the right to alter any or all of these conditions at any time. Meditators in retreat and volunteers are to abide by this or any subsequent agreements and amendments. If not your services for LCA are terminated and you are to leave the property as directed by the acting center director.

By signing this agreement I forfeit all right to pursue legal action of any kind against A Land Of Calm Abiding, the FPMT, Inc. or any or all of its employees, representatives or volunteers, nor disparage the same in any way in perpetuity.

I have read and understood the above and agree to abide by these terms as conditions of residence at Land of Calm Abiding and I acknowledge having received a copy of this document.

(Print Name)

(Signature)

Date:_____