



# Vajraloka

Buddhist Meditation Centre

2015 Retreats



VAJRALOKA

MEDITATION CENTRE

## News for 2015

All of our regular themes, exploring the whole Triratna system of meditation, are on the programme this coming year. We also have a number of guest leaders. Paramananda leads his first retreat here for some years, with the intriguingly titled 'The Other Side of Insight', and Vajradevi returns with 'Uncontrived Mindfulness'. Prakasha will be leading his popular 'Breath by Breath' retreat under a new title - 'Anapanasati – Mindfulness as a Path to Awakening', as well as a new retreat for Order members 'Awakening the Bodhicitta'.

Kamalashila again leads his very well received retreat on the mandala of sadhana practice for Order members 'The Path of Total Integration', and co-leads (with Tejananda) a new theme which is open to Order members and others - 'The Dynamics of Insight – Exploring spiritual death, and its implications in practice'. We also have a new title for a perennial topic, the whole Triratna system of meditation 'From Integration to Spiritual Receptivity'. There are two of these retreats, which we recommend to experienced meditators, and the men's one in November is particularly appropriate for men who've asked for ordination. Finally, there is now an extra 'Simply Being' retreat – as before there are two longer ones, one of which is for Order members, and now there is an extra one-week 'Simply Being' retreat, which is open to all.

### New to Vajraloka and Buddhist meditation?

Three of our retreats this year – 'Spring Retreat', 'The Art of Meditation' and 'Satipatthana, the Buddha's Teaching on Mindfulness' – are suitable for people with limited experience of meditation or Buddhism in the Triratna Community context, including those who have been training in Mindfulness-based approaches. On these retreats, alongside the main teaching sessions, we offer individual teaching and support, as needed, around our basic approaches to meditation. Although Vajraloka is a Buddhist retreat centre, you do not have to consider yourself a Buddhist to come on our retreats. Looking forward to seeing you here in 2015.

### The Vajraloka team



Rijumitra, Tejananda, Ian, Jinapalita, Bodhananda & Meynard

# Men's Retreats

## Practice Retreats

Led by Vajraloka team members

**2 – 9 January**

**28 August – 4 September**

**24 – 31 December**

For men with at least 3 years of regular meditation / mindfulness practice

Our three Practice Retreats are run on a dana (generosity) basis  
The suggested donation is £40/36 per night

The main feature of these popular retreats is that they allow retreatants to follow the themes and rhythms emerging in their own meditation. In some ways they can be compared to going on solitary retreat while offering the support and structure that practising in the company of others can bring.

While the Practice retreats have no formal teaching input, the daily programme can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual with support from Vajraloka team members. The simple programme has periods of morning and afternoon meditation with chanting and ritual in the evening. Daily meditation reviews with team members are available on request.

## Doorways to Liberation

Led by Bodhananda

**10 – 17 July**

£280/252

For men with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

The Buddha taught that all phenomena have three 'marks': they are impermanent, unsatisfactory and insubstantial. Seeing these fundamental truths directly can dramatically change the way we relate to ourselves, others and the world.

Drawing on the practices of Mindfulness of Breathing, Metta Bhavana, Just Sitting and Mindfulness of the Four Postures - (sitting, walking, standing and lying down) – we will seek to cultivate positive, inquisitive states of mind.

Through experiential workshop sessions, we will open directly to the three marks in our moment to moment experience. Each mark or doorway not only opens into others, but also supports the arising of the Bodhicitta, the heart's response of wisdom to the suffering of living beings and the urge to realise Buddhahood for the benefit of all.

## From Integration to Spiritual Receptivity

Led by Rijumitra and Tejananda

21 – 30 November

£360/324

For men with at least 3 years of regular meditation / mindfulness practice

Sangharakshita's system of meditation – integration, positive emotion, spiritual death, spiritual rebirth and spiritual receptivity - is a complete path for the cultivation of tranquillity and insight.

On this retreat we will be exploring practical ways to take our meditation and Dharma practice further in breadth and depth, from the cultivation of absorption and metta to the cultivation of insight into the Three Marks, as well as the culmination of our practice in terms of 'spiritual receptivity' – just sitting and even opening to 'spontaneous compassionate activity'.

Open to men with some years of experience of meditation in the Triratna Community, this retreat is especially suitable for Order Members and men who have asked for ordination, or who are thinking of doing so.



# Mixed Retreats

## The Dynamics of Insight

Exploring spiritual death, and its implications in practice

With Kamalashila and Tejananda

23 – 30 January

£280/252

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

In our system of practice, spiritual death, or insight, is followed by spiritual rebirth. As meditation practice, spiritual rebirth can take the form of visualising a Buddha or bodhisattva - symbolising the awakened being that we can become. But there is also a principle involved: spiritual death enables us to see through delusion while spiritual rebirth embodies what we 'open to' after some aspect of delusion has actually been seen through.

As the metaphors of 'death' and 'rebirth' suggest, it's likely that as well as opening up new perspectives, both of these phases of insight will have their challenges. As in the stories of Mara's attacks on the Buddha-to-be, when threatened by insight, the ego tends to fight back. This can take many forms – for example fear, anxiety or a strong desire to fall back into the welcoming arms of samsara!

So on this retreat, from the basis of integration and positive emotion, we want to explore spiritual death and rebirth in a clear and compassionate way. Deepening in our practice depends on working with what presents itself – whether it's openness and pleasure, or contraction and pain. Difficulties are an opportunity but we need the confidence that comes from knowing how best to approach them. This retreat will explore both the difficulties, and the opportunities, of the path to Awakening.



## Simply Being

Led by Tejananda

**27 February – 6 March**

£280/252

**6 – 16 November**

£400/360

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

'Simply being' points to a quality of awakesness and receptivity that we can recognise at any moment, both in and outside of formal meditation. It's an openness to full presence in our being – in our body, senses and awareness. It suggests being what we really are, beyond conceptual fabrication and inseparable from nature itself, which is undivided and ungraspable.

In opening to the depths of our immediate experience (shamatha), we may sense or glimpse 'basic space' – the all-pervading, pristine awareness-emptiness that is inseparable from manifest, loving, compassionate energy (vipashyana). We'll explore this by way of the five jnanas or 'undivided-awarenesses' which make up the dharmadhatu-mandala. This is the essence of the well-known mandala of the five Buddhas, and is a simple and very practical 'map' of our immediate experience. Which all points us back to 'just this' – what is here already, unnoticed: simply being.

(See also 17 - 28 April - 'Simply Being' for Order members)



## The Other Side of Insight

Led by Paramananda

**13 – 23 March**

£400/360

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

Insight is often approached through various methods oriented to deconstructing our deep-rooted conceptions that support the idea of a fixed self. However, this approach may sometimes seem to neglect the importance of compassion, love and beauty in preparing the ground for insight to take root.

In this retreat, which will be conducted largely in silence and will have a full programme of meditation, we will emphasise the role of emotion and collective practice as a way of opening the heart and expanding the feeling of self to include others and the world.

Paramananda has been leading retreats for thirty years and has a distinctive style that stresses body and heart as keys to opening to the nature of reality.



## The Art of Meditation

Led by Bodhananda

**3 – 12 April**

£360/324

For people with some experience of Triratna meditation, or of mindfulness approaches

For many of us, our exploration of Buddhism starts with meditation. Through regular practice we develop calm and clarity of mind and a greater depth of awareness and sensitivity towards ourselves, others and the world around us.

There are times when this unfolding development seems to know no bounds and this can greatly inspire us. However, there can be periods when it feels as if our practice has come to a grinding halt. Meditation seems like very hard work and we begin to lose touch with what inspired us to practise in the first place.

You are not alone in this kind of experience! It can be that we become over-attached to particular approaches to meditation, losing the sense of creativity. At Vajraloka we teach fresh approaches employing a wider range of colours from our palette in an atmosphere of friendly support and encouragement.

Come and rediscover your inspiration for meditation in the friendly company of the Vajraloka team in our beautiful and tranquil surroundings. Learn to paint with new styles and colours!



## In Bahiya's Footsteps

Led by Rijumitra

8 – 17 May

£360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

The Bahiya Sutta is famous for the Buddha's advice to Bahiya: *'In the seen there is just that which is seen'*. But there is much more to it - it is a story that can illuminate our own meditative path.

The first part of the retreat will have a strong emphasis on integration and positive emotion, cultivating clarity, metta and stability of mind as we reflect on Bahiya's decision to seek out the Buddha. We will consider Bahiya's own questioning of 'where he was' spiritually, his decision to go forth from his home to seek out the truth, the Buddha's teaching to him and finally his death.

On this basis, the second part will introduce elements of 'spiritual death' or insight meditation as we consider the Buddha's teaching to Bahiya and Bahiya's own awakening.





## Spring Retreat

Led by the Vajraloka team

23 – 30 May

£280/252

For people with some experience of Triratna meditation, or of mindfulness approaches

Sangharakshita says we should be aware of our minds at all times – but how do we do this? And what are the benefits to our practice? How do we really engage with mindfulness in a way that doesn't feel contrived and 'added on', leaving us feeling stiff and unnatural? How can the profound words of the Buddha in the Satipatthana Sutta inform and wake up our own practice of mindfulness?

During the retreat there will be instructions for working with awareness and right view, and input on aspects of the sutta including all four 'spheres' of mindfulness. The focus will be on how we use mindfulness as a support to vipassana/clear-seeing



### Satipatthana: The Buddha's teaching on Mindfulness

Led by Bodhananda and Tejananda

5 – 12 June

£280/252

For people with some experience of Triratna meditation, or of mindfulness approaches

The Satipatthana Sutta is one of the most important and influential discourses of the early Buddhist teachings. The Buddha shows how attention to four 'spheres' of our being - body, feelings, mental-emotional events and evanescent momentary sensations (dhammas) – can lead to awakening to our true nature and the cessation of dukkha (suffering, stress, dissatisfaction).

This radically transformative teaching is compassion in action. Offering means that effectively address the alienation, disembodiment and stress which increasingly characterise life today, it restores a deep integrity of body, heart, mind and world.

It is heartening that mindfulness is becoming widely taught as a way of alleviating distress and suffering through approaches such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). In this retreat we'll explore the original satipatthana teaching of the Buddha that takes mindfulness and compassion ever deeper. As such, it will be a helpful retreat for anyone wishing to deepen their mindfulness practice and particularly for those studying mindfulness-based approaches such as MBSR or MBCT.

## Uncontrived Mindfulness

Led by Vajradevi with Tejananda

19 June – 1 July

£480/432

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

How can the profound words of the Buddha in the Satipatthana Sutta inform and wake up our own practice of mindfulness? How do we really engage with mindfulness in a way that doesn't feel contrived and 'added on', leaving us feeling stiff and unnatural?

During the retreat we will work with right view, awareness and on aspects of the sutta including all 4 'spheres' of mindfulness. The focus will be on how we use mindfulness as a support to vipassana/clear seeing and the end of suffering.

We will explore the role of receptivity in mindfulness and the 'wise' or 'unwise' attention we bring to every aspect of our experience. We will also be looking at how continuity of mindfulness can touch and transform our experience through simple presence and intelligent awareness, developing both steadiness of mind and heart and insight into the nature of all things.



## From Integration to Spiritual Receptivity

Led by Rijumitra and the Vajraloka team

24 July – 2 August

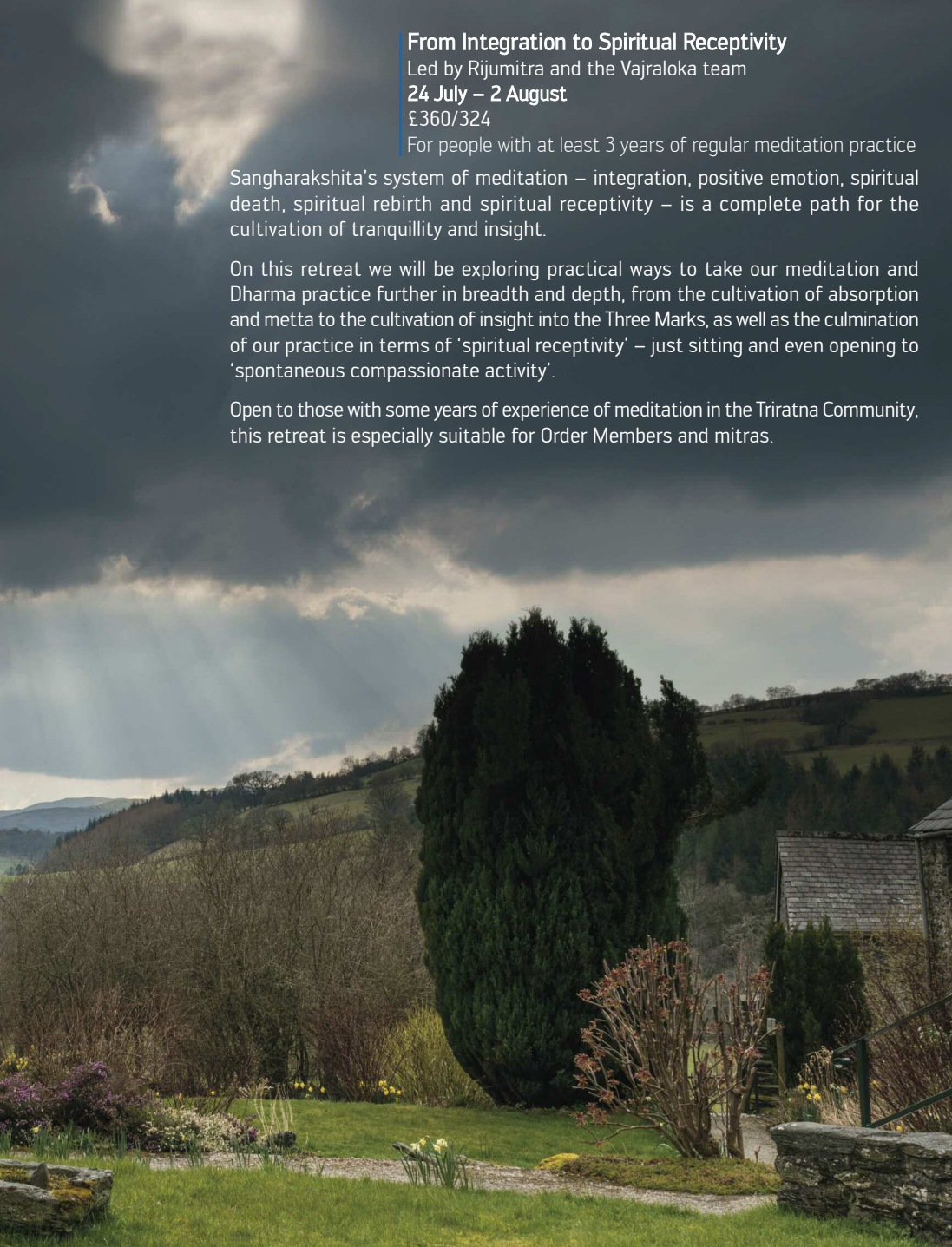
£360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

Sangharakshita's system of meditation – integration, positive emotion, spiritual death, spiritual rebirth and spiritual receptivity – is a complete path for the cultivation of tranquillity and insight.

On this retreat we will be exploring practical ways to take our meditation and Dharma practice further in breadth and depth, from the cultivation of absorption and metta to the cultivation of insight into the Three Marks, as well as the culmination of our practice in terms of 'spiritual receptivity' – just sitting and even opening to 'spontaneous compassionate activity'.

Open to those with some years of experience of meditation in the Triratna Community, this retreat is especially suitable for Order Members and mitras.



## Brahmaviharas: The Heart of Enlightenment

Led by Bodhananda

7 – 18 August

£440/396

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

*'When standing, walking, sitting, lying down,  
Let one establish well this mindfulness in loving-kindness,  
This, it is said, is the divine abode.'*

Song of Loving-Kindness, Metta Sutta

The four brahmaviharas are considered in Buddhism to be the highest, most refined human emotions. They are not just feelings or emotions that occasionally arise, but ones that we can live in and live by all the time. The four brahmavihara meditation practices are loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. They can be understood as four related qualities or perhaps better, as four different ways the spiritually mature person relates to others according to their situation.

The Buddha taught that practising these four qualities leads to the 'liberation of the heart which is love.' On this retreat carefully guided meditations in all four practices will be introduced in an unhurried and supportive environment.





## **Anapanasati: Mindfulness as a Path to Awakening**

Led by Prakasha

**09 – 20 September**

£440/396

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

This retreat will explore the sixteen contemplations of the Buddha's teaching on awareness of the in-and-out breath from the Anapanasati Sutta. The breath is used as a focus for awareness of the four foundations of body, feeling-tone, mental states and mental objects.

The practice is a complete path to awakening. By bringing awareness and attention to our direct experience we cultivate both tranquillity (shamatha) and penetrating insight (vipashyana). When phenomena are recognised as impermanent, unsatisfactory and insubstantial, then the three gateways to liberation arise.

Prakasha has been leading retreats for many years and is well known in the Triratna Community for his clear and inspiring approach.

## The Awakening Heart and the Divine Abodes

Led by Rijumitra and Tejananda

9 – 18 October

£360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

This retreat will focus on the four brahmaviharas or 'divine abodes' – love, compassion, joy and equanimity – in the context of the cultivation of the Bodhicitta (the awakening heart), and the tonglen or 'giving and receiving' practice. Bodhicitta could be described as both the heart-response of wisdom to the suffering of living beings everywhere and the urge to realise Buddhahood for the benefit of all.

The divine abodes are also known as the 'illimitables,' as their remit is universal – all living beings without exception. The practices that we'll explore on this retreat are all ways of opening our hearts and responding to the joys and sufferings of living beings – opening to the inseparable wisdom and compassion of Bodhicitta itself.





## Emptiness and the Heart Sutra

Led by Tejananda

11 – 20 December

£360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

*'Not even wisdom to attain, attainment too is emptiness'*

Buddhist practice is aimed at fully-awakening to the actual nature of things. Prajnaparamita, one of the most important Mahayana schools, calls this awakening 'the perfection of wisdom'. Yet the Heart Sutra, a Prajnaparamita text, asserts that there is no wisdom and no attainment – in fact, there is not even any non-attainment! As such paradoxes suggest, when it comes to things-as-they-are, words and concepts have their limitations as well as their undeniable uses.

We will explore all this on this retreat through the three levels of wisdom – first getting a clear basic understanding of the teaching, then allowing the mind to quieten and reflecting experientially on the emptiness of self, and of all phenomena. And finally, seeing that this is always pointing us back to the beauty and simplicity of direct experience and resting in simplicity in a completely uncontrived way.

As well as brief practical introductions to the main themes of the sutra, the retreat will include led reflective meditations pointing to the emptiness of self in the five skandhas, plenty of time for personal practice, and recitations of the sutra itself.



# Mixed Order Retreats

## Awakening the Bodhicitta

Led by Prakasha

11 – 22 February

£440/396

This retreat is an introduction to the teachings of the Seven-point Mind Training of Atisha. We will be arousing the heart of wisdom and compassion through the practice of formless meditation and tonglen. Tonglen means giving and receiving. It is a simple and effective way to cultivate love and compassion towards ourselves and others amidst the challenges of everyday life. These profound teachings integrate sadhana, formless meditation and the qualities of the four brahmaviharas into a comprehensive approach for awakening the Bodhicitta.



## Simply Being

Led by Tejananda

17 – 28 April

£440/396

'Simply being' points to a quality of awakesness and receptivity that we can recognise at any moment, both inside and outside of formal meditation. It's an openness to full presence in our being – in our body, senses and awareness. It suggests being what we really are, beyond conceptual fabrication and inseparable from nature itself, which is undivided and ungraspable.

In opening to the depths of our immediate experience (shamatha), we may glimpse 'basic space' – the all-pervading, pristine awareness-emptiness that is inseparable from manifest compassionate energy (vipashyana). We'll explore this by way of the five jnanas or 'undivided-awarenesses' which make up the dharmadhatu-mandala – a useful, simple, and very practical 'map' of our immediate experience. And it all points us back to 'just this' – what is here already, unnoticed: simply being.

## The Path of Total Integration

### From Sunyata to spiritual renaissance in the mandala of sadhana practice

Led by Kamalashila

23 – 30 October

£280/252

Sadhana combines all aspects of the system of meditation into one and connects with the initiation given at ordination. It is a powerful and largely non-rational means of forging an ongoing link with the energy of awakening, the dhamma nijama. This retreat will focus on sadhana as the expression and culmination of the whole system of practice.

Each day we will explore the relationship of sadhana to the principles and expressions of our entire mandala of practices. For sadhana to work its magic, it needs to arise out of the clarity of mindfulness, the warm heart of metta and bodhicitta aspiration, and reflection on Sunyata.

Our system of practice may seem quite complex to begin with. Deepening our meditation is a matter of genuinely making it our own. The art of sadhana boils it all down to complete simplicity, sadhana itself dissolving into the pure spiritual receptivity of 'no more learning', the path of no-path.



# About Vajraloka

A cluster of traditional Welsh stone farm buildings with attractive gardens, Vajraloka rests on a green hillside in a quiet and lovely valley. Below us runs the River Alwen, which flows from nearby Glyn Myfyr - in Welsh, 'The Vale of Meditation'. Craggy hillsides, streams, woods and meadows surround us, while from a little higher up, the dramatic mountains of Snowdonia can be glimpsed.

Vajraloka has been offering Buddhist meditation retreats for over 30 years, its location and the facilities that have been developed here supporting the deepening of practice. Many comment on the atmosphere of the shrine room, redolent of the thousands of hours of meditation practice that have taken place here. Our accommodation is simple, warm and comfortable. We have a mix of single and shared bedrooms. In the dining room, our team cooks serve up fine nutritious vegan food - which draws on a range of protein sources. When feasible, our food and drinks come from organic, Fairtrade sources.

## **Being on retreat**

There are many variables to our retreats, including leaders, theme and the length, but some core ingredients apply across our whole programme of events.

Whatever the theme, our retreats are mostly in silence, which supports our practice of discovering 'inner silence', letting the mind quieten. At the start of retreats, though, we always allow time for people to talk and get to know each other. Also during the silent period, we offer daily practice reviews. In these you can talk through what is arising in your practice with a member of the retreat teaching team.

Here's a typical programme:

**Meditation 7.00 & 8.00**  
**Breakfast 9.00**  
**Meditation / teaching 10.30**  
**Lunch 1.00**  
**Working meditation 3.00**  
**Meditation / teaching 4.30**  
**Dinner 6.00**  
**Practice reviews**  
**Meditation & puja 7.45**

On the final day, our retreats finish around 9.30 a.m.  
So there is normally plenty of time to make your journey home.



## BOOKING A RETREAT

To book a retreat, you can either pay in full through our website or post us a cheque payable to 'FWBO Corwen'. If booking by post, please include the booking form, which can be printed from our website.

The retreat deposit is £70 and is non-refundable and non-transferable. There is no facility for payment of deposits on the website, so if you wish to reserve a place with a deposit please send a cheque by post and forward the balance within six weeks of the retreat to confirm your booking.

We offer a concessionary rate for students, the low-waged and those on Triratna support rates. Further reductions may be possible - please contact us in advance. We have some single rooms and these can be requested for health or related reasons, but allocation depends on health needs and demand, so unfortunately we cannot guarantee all requests for single rooms.

It is essential that we know whether you have mental or physical health issues or are on any serious medication.

We can cater for most special diets for medical reasons, but please contact us about this at least ten days before the start of the retreat.



## 2015 RETREAT CALENDAR

02/01 – 09/01	Practice Retreat	7 nights	MEN	B
23/01 – 30/01	The Dynamics of Insight	7 nights	MIXED	B
11/02 – 22/02	Awakening the Bodhicitta	11 nights	MIXED	A
27/02 – 06/03	Simply Being	7 nights	MIXED	B
13/03 – 23/03	The Other Side of Insight	10 nights	MIXED	B
03/04 – 12/04	The Art of Meditation	9 nights	MIXED	C
17/04 – 28/04	Simply Being	11 nights	MIXED	A
08/05 – 17/05	In Bahiya's Footsteps	9 nights	MIXED	B
23/05 – 30/05	Spring Retreat	7 nights	MIXED	C
05/06 – 12/06	Satipatthana	7 nights	MIXED	C
19/06 – 01/07	Uncontrived Mindfulness	12 nights	MIXED	B
10/07 – 17/07	Doorways to Liberation	7 nights	MIXED	B
24/07 – 02/08	From Integration to Receptivity	9 nights	MIXED	B
07/08 – 18/08	Brahmaviharas	11 nights	MIXED	B
28/08 – 04/09	Practice Retreat	7 nights	MEN	B
09/09 – 20/09	Anapanasati	11 nights	MIXED	B
09/10 – 18/10	Awakening Heart & Divine Abodes	9 nights	MIXED	B
23/10 – 30/10	Path of Total Integration	7 nights	MIXED	A
06/11 – 16/11	Simply Being	10 nights	MIXED	B
21/11 – 30/11	From Integration to Receptivity	9 nights	MEN	B
11/12 – 20/12	Emptiness and the Heart Sutra	9 nights	MIXED	B
24/12 – 31/12	Practice Retreat	7 nights	MEN	B

A - Order members only

B - At least 3 years of regular practice

C - Some experience of meditation or mindfulness approaches

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Vajraloka is a centre of the Triratna Buddhist Community