

# *Vajraloka*

**Buddhist Meditation Centre**

**2011 Retreat Programme**



# Welcome

## With another year, comes a new set of retreats for Vajraloka...

All feature the hallmark Vajraloka ingredients. Most notably, all draw on the rich mosaic of practices and principles outlined in the Triratna Buddhist Community's System of Meditation.

Each retreat has a few days for people to talk and get to know each other and then silence to support the deepening of meditation and reflection.

All our retreats also offer individual daily meditation reviews with members of the resident community – to help foster clarity, confidence and a sense of direction with practice.

A key quality of the teaching here is the emphasis on finding your own relationship to the practices and developing trust in them. So, learning from one's own moment by moment experience (from the agonising through to the ecstatic) as means to kindle wisdom and compassion.

Alongside these core elements come some changes for our 2011 programme.

We have increased the number of retreats that explore the Satipatthana Sutta and its Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

In the past year, the resident community have collectively drawn much inspiration from this sutta – which is spilling over into our choice of retreats. With all the complexity and mental stimulation of modern life, the sutta's simple, clear and profound instructions are especially potent and helpful.

An area that comes up regularly in meditation reviews is self doubt, confusion and uncertainty about how to 'work' in meditation. Our two new 'Meditating with Confidence' retreats aim to explore this area head on - helping bring awareness to those deeply held self views, expectations and other attitudes to practice that can so easily undermine our efforts.

I hope you will join us in the coming year, as we continue to explore ways of unravelling our confusions and limitations, supported by the teachings of the Buddha, amidst the wonderful conditions of Vajraloka.

Balajit



# Mens Retreats

## Stages and Cycles to Freedom

Led by Saraha and Balajit

The System of Meditation is a clear and comprehensive framework for the spiritual life. It comprises four great phases - integration, positive emotion, spiritual death and spiritual rebirth – that progressively liberate us from limiting views about ourselves and others.

On this retreat we will journey through, and explore, the principles and practices it embodies. Particular emphasis will be placed on Pratītya-Samutpāda or Conditioned Arising – which underlies the whole system.

Through discussion groups we will clarify our views and assumptions. Through workshop sessions, we will directly investigate aspects of our experience, in the context of the System of Meditation.

As guided by Sangharakshita's teachings, drawing wisdom and inspiration from the Pali Canon, we aspire to the highest goal, the way things are, the sublime freedom of the heart.

**Feb 18 - 27**  
**£324 / 288**

## Meditating with Confidence

Led by Appicha / Balajit with Vajraloka team

Have you ever felt that your meditation 'just doesn't seem to be working' and that you must be doing something wrong?

This retreat focuses on the confidence that can come from learning to trust our unfolding experience, and the insightful perspectives that can follow. Holding an over-idealised view of meditation is very common, and can easily leave us feeling frustrated and disempowered.

We might have heard about such things as the System of Meditation, just sitting, dhyana and Insight, but felt they were out of reach, leaving us with doubt and uncertainty about our own meditation practice.

In an atmosphere of trust and sensitivity, we will explore how these views can be seen through. There will be space to ask 'difficult questions' about the practices, helping us to make them 'our own', as we discover our unique relationship to meditation.

**May 27 – Jun 3**

Led by Appicha

**Oct 28 – Nov 4**

Led by Balajit

**£252 / 224**

## The Brahmaviharas

Led by Rijumitra

The metta bhavana is one of four meditation practices known as the brahmaviharas or "sublime abodes". The other three enable us to cultivate and recognize compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

These four qualities are the basis of emotional maturity and the foundation of transcendental compassion. This retreat will seek to cultivate a basic foundation in metta and spacious awareness.

On this basis, we will explore the nature of empathy through compassion and sympathetic joy, arriving at the qualities of equanimity as an active force for insightful change.

Together these practices are a potent means of transformation.

**April 22 – May 2**

**£360 / 320**

## Mindful Liberation

Led by Appicha

The Buddha called himself a physician whose task was to remove unnecessary suffering. Sometimes however, we resolve to sit and meditate, but it seems our suffering is increasing! How can we approach this creatively?

By bringing kindly, patient and persistent awareness to the whole of our experience (warts and all!) we can come into a wholesome relationship with all that arises.

We will meditate and reflect on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Experiencing our own bodily sensations, feelings, emotions and content of mind, we aim to directly experience Insight into the true nature of Mind, the liberating truth of the Dharma.

**Jun 10 - 19**

**£324 / 288**



*"Love is the awareness of the being of another person"*

**Sangharakshita**



## From Integration to Spiritual Rebirth

led by Tejananda and the Vajraloka team

This retreat is open to all men with experience of meditation in the Triratna Community and especially those who have asked for ordination, or are thinking of doing so.

Sangharakshita's System of Meditation – integration, positive emotion, spiritual death, spiritual rebirth and just sitting – is based in traditional Buddhist teaching, yet freshly and appropriately re-expressed.

It is a complete path for the cultivation of tranquillity and insight. On this retreat we will be exploring it in depth, from the fundamentals (mindfulness of breathing and metta bhavana) to reflection, insight practice and formless meditation.

**Dec 9 - 21**  
**£432 / 384**

## Practice Retreats

Practice retreats do not have any formal teaching. The daily programme has periods of meditation in the morning and afternoon, with chanting and ritual in the evening.

These retreats allow people to follow the themes and rhythms emerging in their own meditation practice, as on a solitary retreat, whilst having the support that practising with others can bring. Daily meditation reviews are available on request.

***These retreats are run on a dana (generosity) basis. Our suggested donation is £ 36 / 32 (conc) per night.***

**Dec 31 – Jan 7**  
**Jan 7 – Jan 14**  
**Mar 25 – Apr 1**  
**Jun 24 – Jul 1**



*“Vajraloka is a pool of silence; an open secret; a shrine room so thick with meditation that you could cut the air.”*  
**Vishvapani, Manchester**

# *Mixed Retreats*



### **Focusing and Meditation**

Led by Manjudeva, Balajit and Jutika

Buddhist meditation and the practice of 'Focusing' can help us lead richer, more meaningful lives. On this retreat we will practise both, drawing on the many ways they support each other.

Each day we will sense into the intuitive intelligence of the body, by 'Focusing' in pairs, in a private space. During the periods of meditation, we will practice cultivating sustained, kindly attention towards our embodied experience. In the evenings, through ritual and devotion, we will seek inspiration from the mythic, archetypal and elemental realms.

Please note: this retreat is only suitable for those with some previous experience of focusing.

**Sep 23 - 30**  
**£252 / 224**

Manjudeva, currently based in North London, is fully qualified with the British Focusing Teachers Association (BFTA) and the Focusing Institute in New York.

### **Opening to the Body of Experience**

Led by Balajit

Set within the context of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, this retreat will explore how 'clear knowing' of our moment-to-moment experience can gradually unravel the knots of confusion that make us feel limited and bound.

We will explore ways of deepening our practice of the mindfulness of breathing and metta bhavana, in particular through grounding and through body awareness. From a foundation in samatha (clarity and stability of mind), we will approach our experience from a wisdom perspective.

How does our actual experience correspond to the more abstract self images and views we may hold? Such inquiry will be set against the Buddha's teachings on the three marks (impermanence, not-self and unsatisfactoriness) and conditioned arising (Pratītya-Samutpāda). These intricately interrelated teachings being potential gateways to liberation.

**Apr 8 - 17**  
**£324 / 288**





### Satipatthana – Mindfulness and Wisdom

led by Tejananda & Smrtiratna / Rijumitra

The Satipatthana Sutta or 'Discourse on Establishing Mindfulness' is one of the Buddha's central teachings on the path to bodhi – wisdom, awakening. Mindfulness is the transformative application of awareness to our immediate experience.

The Buddha outlined four main areas of mindfulness practice, each of which can act as a gateway to fully waking up to what and who we truly are. These are mindfulness of the body, of feelings (or hedonic tone), of the heart-mind and of mental contents.

In these retreats we will introduce mindfulness practices in the light of our System of Meditation and practice in the Triratna Community. These practices enable us to bring penetrating awareness into every aspect of our being and, ultimately, into the heart of the Dharma itself.

**Mar 11 - 23** (Tejananda and Smrtiratna)

**Nov 11 - 23** (Tejananda and Rijumitra)  
**£432 / 384**

### The Awakening Heart and the Divine Abodes

led by Rijumitra and Tejananda

This retreat will focus on the four brahmaviharas or 'divine abodes' – love, compassion, joy and equanimity – in the context of cultivating 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 scope is universal; all sentient beings without exception.

The practices that we will explore on this retreat are all ways of opening our hearts and responding to the joys and sufferings of living beings – opening to the wisdom and compassion of Bodhicitta itself.

**Sep 9 - 18**

**£324 / 288**



### **Formless Meditation – Awareness and Emptiness**

led by Tejananda

At the heart of the Dharma is the mysterious sky-like quality of awareness – always present, yet impossible for the thinking mind to grasp.

Formless meditation combines just sitting with simple, subtle and insightful ways of exploring our direct experience, including the surprising depths of body-awareness.

By gently questioning some of our usual assumptions about space, time, thought and 'self', our hearts and minds may open to the unsuspected potential of awareness itself.

The retreat will include a clear practical introduction, including an outline of the place of just sitting and formless meditation within the Triratna Community system of practice.

**Oct 14 - 23**

**£324 / 288**

**Feb 4 - 14**

**(Order Members only)**

**£360 / 320**

### **Emptiness and the Heart Sutra**

led by Tejananda

***“Form is emptiness;  
emptiness itself is form”***

Samatha (clarity and stability of mind) and vipassana (insight meditation) are two interconnected aspects of Buddhist meditation aimed at full awakening to the real nature of 'things'.

Yet, the Heart Sutra teaches that there is no awakening and no 'things' to have a real nature. Such paradox suggests that words and concepts have their limitations as well as their uses.

These are all issues that we will explore on this retreat - not through study, but by cultivating samatha and reflecting on the paradoxes and mysteries of the Heart Sutra's teaching on the complete emptiness of all phenomena.

There will be succinct practical introductions to the different sections of the Heart Sutra, and reflective meditations on the meaning of the sutra, within the context of the Triratna Community's System of Meditation. We will also be chanting the sutra.

**Jul 8 - 19**

**£396 / 352**



*“When the past has ceased and the future not yet arisen,  
In the unimpeded state of present wakefulness,  
Rest in the matter of mind looking into mind”*

– **Padmasambhava**

# *Weekend Taster*

*mixed retreat*

## **Weekend Taster**

led by the Vajraloka team

If you are relatively new to meditation and retreats, this long weekend is an excellent way of learning more and getting a taste of Vajraloka and its supportive conditions.

Through teaching and workshops we will explore how to enjoy and deepen the main meditation practices of the Triratna Community – mindfulness of breathing and metta bhavana, together with just sitting and reflection on the Dharma.

There will be plenty of opportunities to discuss things with members of the team as well as some time in silence – a valuable feature of all our retreats at Vajraloka.

**Aug 26 - 29**

**£108 / 96**



# Mixed Retreats for order members

## **Insight and Spiritual Community** With Tejananda and Kamalashila

As with all Vajraloka retreats, this Order retreat will feature plenty of silence and meditation as well as ritual and devotional practices. In this context, we will also be exploring together dimensions of our own Dharma and meditation practice. In particular, sharing accounts of significant breakthroughs or shifts in our own practice over the years.

Sharing in 'open space' or 'speaking from silence' sessions in this way is both positively challenging and can be very supportive of our practice of both meditation and sangha.

To facilitate the 'open space' sessions and keep things reasonably intimate, this retreat will be limited to 12 Order members, plus members of the Vajraloka team.

The retreat will be facilitated by Tejananda and Kamalashila, but there could be some led sessions by others on the retreat. Most of the meditation sessions will be open to allow you to follow the direction of your own practice.

**May 6 - 15**  
**£324 / 288**

## **Sadhana:** **The Energy of Awakening** led by Kamalashila

Sadhana, the primary Order practice, combines all aspects of the System of Meditation into one and connects with the initiation given at ordination. Its source, the Buddhanusati (Recollection of the Buddha), is one of the kammathanas taught by the Buddha - a powerful and largely non-rational means of forging an ongoing link with the energy of awakening, the Dhamma Niyama.

Though our own tradition of sadhana is non-Vajrayana, there is much we can learn about working with imaginative elements inherited from that tradition, like mantra recitation and evocation of the subtle body through seed-syllables and colour. Some reflection on Sunyata is also essential if sadhana is to work its magic.

The art of sadhana is boiling all this down to complete simplicity. This retreat will strongly focus on the method of practice. Each day we will also discuss the relationship of sadhana to the System of Meditation, such as Just Sitting, and to the spiritual path as a whole.

**Jul 30 - Aug 10**  
**£396 / 352**



**Formless Meditation - Awareness and Emptiness**  
led by Tejananda  
See 'Mixed Retreats' section for full retreat description.  
**Feb 4 - 14 £360 / 320**

# About Vajraloka

## Our Set Up

Vajraloka is a cluster of traditional Welsh stone farm buildings set in attractive gardens, perched on a hill in the quiet and lovely valley of the River Alwen. Craggy hillsides overlook streams, woods and meadows. In the distance lie the dramatic mountains of Snowdonia.

Vajraloka has been offering Buddhist meditation retreats now for over 30 years. Its location, and the facilities that have evolved here, were chosen to support the deepening of practice. Many comment on the shrine room's atmosphere, redolent of the thousands of hours of meditation practice that have taken place there. Our accommodation is simple, warm and comfortable. We have a mix of single and shared bedrooms.

In the dining room, Ian serves up fine nutritious vegan food – which draws on a range of protein sources. When feasible, our food and drinks come from organic, fairtrade sources.

## New to Buddhism & Meditation?

Some of our retreats are suitable for those with only limited experience of Buddhism and meditation. We have given these retreats a D category on the retreat calendar (see inside back cover).

On such retreats, alongside the main teaching sessions, we will provide special introductory tuition and support on the basic meditation practices of the Triratna Community – namely the mindfulness of breathing and the metta bhavana.

Although Vajraloka is a Buddhist retreat centre, you do not have to consider yourself a Buddhist to come on any of our retreats.



1979 Team Members



*Vajraloka has been offering Buddhist meditation retreats now for over 30 years. Its location, and the facilities that have evolved here, were chosen to support the deepening of practice.*

# *Booking a Retreat*



The 2010 Community

# 2011 Retreat Calendar

Dec 31 - Jan 7	Practice Retreat	Mens	C
Jan 7 - 14	Practice Retreat	Mens	C
Feb 4 - 14	Formless Meditation – Awareness and Emptiness	Mixed	A
Feb 18 - 27	Stages and Cycles to Freedom	Men	D
Mar 11 - 23	Satipatthana – Mindfulness and Wisdom	Mixed	C
Mar 25 - Apr 1	Practice Retreat	Men	C
Apr 8 - 17	Opening to the Body of Experience	Mixed	C
Apr 22 - May 2	The Brahmaviharas	Men	C
May 6 - 15	Insight and Spiritual Community	Mixed	A
May 27 - Jun 3	Meditating with Confidence	Men	D
Jun 10 - 19	Mindful Liberation	Men	C
Jun 24 - Jul 1	Practice Retreat	Men	C
Jul 8 - 19	Emptiness and the Heart Sutra	Mixed	B
Jul 30 - Aug 10	Sadhana: the Energy of Awakening	Mixed	A
Aug 26 - 29	Weekend Taster	Mixed	D
Sep 9 - 18	The Awakening Heart and the Divine Abodes	Mixed	C
Sep 23 - 30	Focusing and Meditation	Mixed	D
Oct 14 - 23	Formless Meditation – Awareness and Emptiness	Mixed	B
Oct 28 - Nov 4	Meditating with Confidence	Men	D
Nov 11 - 23	Satipatthana – Mindfulness and Wisdom	Mixed	C
Dec 9 - 21	From Integration to Spiritual Rebirth	Men	D

A- Order Members Only

C- Minimum 3 years

B- Minimum 5 years\*

D- New to Meditation - minimum 6 months

\*Because of the challenging nature of this retreat, we are suggesting that people who come on it have been meditating for at least five years. If you are interested in this retreat but have not been meditating for that long, please contact Vajraloka to discuss with the retreat leader.

## Booking a Retreat

The prices for our retreats are based on a full nightly rate and a concessionary rate – for students, unwaged, OAP's and Triratna Buddhist Centre / businesses workers (on 'support' rates). Further reductions may be available (please contact us).

If you would like to book, you can now pay the full balance of the retreat on-line through our website. Or you can send a cheque made payable to 'FWBO Corwen', accompanied by the booking form (which can be printed from our website).

If you wish to book by paying the deposit, please send a non-refundable, non-transferable £50 cheque.

This deposit will hold your place until six weeks before the retreat starts at which point you must send the full balance (failure to do so may result in losing your place on the retreat). If booking within the six-week period, you will need to send, or pay via the website, the full amount.

As some of our accommodation is in shared bedrooms, we need to know if you snore, or have any special requirements. It is also essential that we know whether you have mental or physical health issues, and are on any "serious" medication. Most special diets for medical reasons can be catered for, but please talk with us about this beforehand.

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**VAJRALOKA**  
**TYN-Y-DDOL**

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Photos by Balajit and Vajraloka guests.  
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