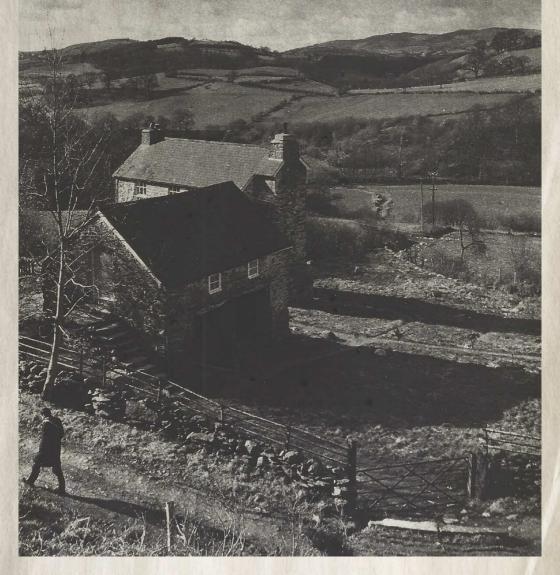
Variable Buddhist Meditation Centre 2018



Passing on the vision....

As our archive photos in this programme show, Vajraloka has come a long way. For over three decades now, Vajraloka's team and guest retreat leaders have been contributing to Triratna's developing lineage of meditation teaching – in particular, offering a practical, hands-on vision of 'what's next' for experienced meditators. This vision goes deeply into all areas of Triratna's system of meditation and supports all areas of Dharma practice.

Yet, Vajraloka wasn't set up to offer meditation teaching. For the first half decade or so, the resident team at Vajraloka followed a daily programme of meditation and work which others would simply join in for a week or more. The team were also exploring their own meditation deeply, and studying traditional meditation texts such as Dhyana for Beginners by Chih-I, together with Sangharakshita's commentaries and seminars.

Before long, it became clear to the resident team that practical input could greatly benefit retreatants' practice. So the centre morphed into offering themed retreats on the main areas of meditation practice in Triratna.

The current team owe a huge amount to those who went before, both for developing that lineage of helpful meditation teaching and for converting the dilapidated farm buildings into a well-appointed retreat centre. The improvement of our facilities continues – there are new projects in the pipeline for the foreseeable future, which we hope you'll like and support.

But above all, we continue to explore and offer what genuinely helps people consolidate and take their practice deeper. We have found that deepening of body awareness enhances all our practices – mindfulness, metta and just sitting included – providing a strong, positive basis for insight (spiritual death) – inquiring into 'how things really are'. There's also great value in taking a flexible, exploratory and even playful approach to practice. Such orientations can enhance not just our meditation but our entire Dharma life.

So please check out this year's themes in the assurance that we and all of our guest leaders have been exploring 'what really helps' for many years. The benefits of that lineage – from Sangharakshita's expositions of Buddhist tradition and then via the many people who have contributed to Vajraloka – are what we are offering to you on every retreat.

The Vajraloka team



Rijumitra, Tejananda, Saccavicaya, Jinapalita and Prajnapriya

Which retreat is for you?



All of our retreats apart from the Men's Practice Retreats in December are open to people of any gender*. Retreats in this programme appear in date order, so to be sure that you can find an appropriate retreat, we've put them into three categories:

FOR PEOPLE WITH SOME EXPERIENCE OF TRIRATNA MEDITATION OR OF MINDFULNESS APPROACHES

These will suit anyone, but particularly if you have limited experience of meditation or of Buddhism in the Triratna context, including those who have been training in 'secular mindfulness' based approaches. These include the two 'Renew and Deepen – everyday liberations' retreats, the 'Spring Weekend Retreat' and 'Satipatthana – the Buddha's teaching on mindfulness'. On these retreats, alongside the main teaching sessions, we offer individual teaching and support, as needed, around Triratna's 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.

FOR PEOPLE WITH AT LEAST 3 YEARS OF REGULAR MEDITATION PRACTICE

The majority of our retreats are suitable for more experienced meditators and three years' practice is a rule-of-thumb.

OPEN TO ALL ORDER MEMBERS

These retreats are only open to members of the Triratna Buddhist Order. These include 'The Ocean of True Meaning', 'Simply Being' in July, and 'Illuminating Sadhana'.

If you have questions about whether a retreat is suitable for you, do please email us on info@vajraloka.org.

*Please note that our facilities are limited at present and on most retreats we can only offer male and female bathrooms. We are fund-raising to build a new block with two further bathrooms which will give us far more flexibility.

Mixed Retreats

Simply Being Led by Jejananda 19 - 28 January £360/324

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

There is an aliveness and awakeness that we can recognise at any moment. It's an openness to our full being – in body, senses and awareness. It points to what we really are, outside of conceptual fabrications.

In recognising and opening to a spacious yet embodied presence, here and now, we may discover a timeless awareness-emptiness that is inseparable from loving, compassionate energy.

We'll explore all this through sitting meditation, experiential 'lookings' and by discovering our own direct experience as awareness, simplicity, intimacy and aliveness. These qualities are gateways to the five 'undivided knowings' (jnanas) which are the essence of the mandala of the five Buddhas. This mandala offers a very practical 'map' of our immediate experience, pointing to what has been here all along, unnoticed.



The Ocean of True Mening (Order retreat)
Led by Vessantara
9-18 February
£360/324

Open to all Order Members

The Ocean of True Meaning is one of the great classic Buddhist meditation texts. This Tibetan practice manual, written by Wangchuk Dorje, the 9th Karmapa, in the 16th century, goes deeply into the practicalities of the whole path to Awakening. In this retreat Vessantara will give an in-depth introduction to the shamatha and vipashyana sections, unpacking their riches and exploring how they can enhance the main Order practices, through presentations and guided meditations.

Vessantara worked with the essence of this material during a 3-year retreat in France, and has continued to learn and practise it in the years since.





Resent and Deeper - energy liberatures Led by members of the Vajraloka team 23 February - 2 March £280/252

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

All Buddhist practices are concerned with liberation. On this retreat, we'll focus on liberations which, though perhaps small, are reachable – especially if you are concerned with rediscovering your inspiration, renewing and deepening your meditation practice.

If your practice seems to have got stuck somewhere, or not to be quite what it was, the Vajraloka team can offer inspiration and helpful practical advice which can enable you free yourself from those constraints. If your practice is going well, but you feel it could be going further or deeper, we can offer ways to cut through unconscious views and assumptions that may be holding you back. This can in turn lead to liberations from negative emotions and afflictions, here and now.

And in these moments of freedom, something wonderful could well emerge – love, compassion and deeper confidence in your potential to awaken fully.

Emptiness and the Heart Satra Led by Tejananda 9-18 March £360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

The Heart Sutra speaks a lot of emptiness, 'Form is emptiness, emptiness itself is form', – but just what is emptiness? What does emptiness have to do with our own Dharma practice? And why is the Bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteshvara, teaching emptiness? Surely he should be teaching metta and compassion!

These are all very pertinent questions, which we will be addressing and exploring on this retreat. We'll see how reality is empty of our views about it – views which aren't just harmless opinions but which give rise to endless, unnecessary, suffering. We'll see how our beliefs in an intrinsic, substantial 'me', separate from the rest of the world, has no basis in actual experience. And we'll see how and why realising emptiness is, precisely, compassion.

We'll be exploring all this on the retreat. As well as brief practical introductions to the themes of the sutra, there will be led meditations pointing to the emptiness of self in the five skandhas, recitations of the sutra itself and plenty of time for personal practice.





The Brahmaniharas - a complete path Led by Rijumitra 23 March - 2 April £400/360

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

Do we dare to turn towards suffering or even the joy of the world? Do we dare to remain open to experience and see the truth of situations unfold? Do we dare to respond?

Subtly, we turn away from life and dull down. This retreat will challenge this habitual response and will give you the tools to turn towards experience and embrace it with the love and responsiveness of the Brahmaviharas. We will engage with the Brahmaviharas drawing out both their active and receptive components and show how they can be a complete path to awakening.



Dhypna through the body Led by Tejananda 6-15 April £360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

If an approach to practice is not working for you, do you just carry on doggedly hoping that it will somehow improve? It's not very likely that this will work!

This is as true of dhyana or absorption practice as any other area. So, on this retreat, we'll be suggesting you try approaches we've found to be helpful and effective in opening to dhyana through exploring body, breath and awareness. We'll also be questioning some of the traditional views and approaches to dhyana down the centuries – what really is helpful and what, perhaps, is not?

Mindfulness of breathing is above all a body meditation, yet ironically some people do it with virtually no actual experience of their body. What is the breath experientially? By uncovering our actual bodily experience, resources for entering dhyana can be discovered right here, already present – just waiting to be noticed.

Simply Being (Order retreat) Led by Tejananda 21 April - 1 May £440/396

Open to all Order Members

There is an aliveness and awakeness that we can recognise at any moment. It's an openness to our full being – in body, senses and awareness. It points to what we really are, outside of conceptual fabrications. In recognising and opening to a spacious yet embodied presence, here and now, we may discover a timeless awareness-emptiness that is inseparable from loving, compassionate energy.

We'll explore all this through sitting meditation, experiential 'lookings' and by discovering our own direct experience as awareness, simplicity, intimacy and aliveness. These qualities are gateways to the five 'undivided knowings' (jnanas) which are the essence of the mandala of the five Buddhas. This mandala offers a very practical 'map' of our immediate experience, pointing to what has been here all along, unnoticed.





Radical Emptries - in the seen, just the seen Led by Rijumitra

11 – 20 May £360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

The Buddha's teaching to Bahiya of the Bark Garment rings down the years 'in the seen, there is just the seen, in the heard, just the heard, in the sensed, just the sensed and in the cognised, just the cognised'. On the spot, Bahiya became enlightened. How was this possible?

During the retreat we will retrace Bahiya's footsteps. Through meditation and dialogue, we'll see just how prepared he was to hear the Buddha's teaching and – most important – what we can learn from this so we too can create the conditions to see what Bahiya saw.

If you want a retreat that engages with the conditions needed to cut through to the radical truth of the emptiness of things, then this is the retreat for you.



Spring Weekerd Retreat Led by the Vajraloka team 25 - 28 May

£120/108

For people with some experience of Triratna meditation or of mindfulness-based approaches

If you're relatively new to meditation and retreats, our three-night Spring Weekend Retreat is an excellent way of getting a taste of Vajraloka, its beautiful surroundings and its supportive conditions. Through teaching and workshops, we will explore how to enjoy and deepen the main Triratna Community practices – mindfulness of breathing and metta bhavana, together with just sitting and reflection on the Dharma. There will be opportunity for discussion and chats with members of the team as well as periods of silent practice – a valuable feature of all our retreats at Vajraloka.







Radical Embrace Led by Singhashri and Balajit 8-15 June

6 – 15 June £280/252

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

How can we learn to embrace ourselves, others and the world more deeply and radically, with awareness and compassion? In what ways do we close down to ourselves, others and the world?

On this retreat we will focus on meeting ourselves where we are, with appreciation and curiosity, inviting all our disparate selves into a space of acceptance and presence. We will look at how resources including nature, grounding and simple mindful movement can help our practice deepen.

As well as exploring absorption (dhyana), the retreat will offer approaches to more deeply entrenched places within us. What do these forces need to help them relax and transform?

From a more settled space, we can see more clearly into our false views and how they hold us back. Gently encouraging a more vulnerable and authentic experience, which resonates with our natural ability to connect deeply with ourselves and others, we can respond more creatively to our day-to-day experience.

Uncortained Mindfulness and the Unveliable Witness

Led by Vajradevi with Tejananda

22 June – 1 July £360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

Central to our Dharma life is a simple yet profound distinction; that between our direct experience mediated through the senses, and the thoughts and ideas we have about those experiences.

We are usually unaware that the concepts we base our sense of self on and navigate our world by, are frequently flawed in a deep and on-going way. We look through the distorted lens of our own views and assumptions, making us an unreliable witness to our own inner experience.

On the retreat we'll cultivate Awareness and Right View, to become mindful of, and curious about, what is actually happening in experience. Using the framework of the five skandhas to go to the heart of what we take to be 'true' we can come to see the process of construction and fabrication that is happening each moment. Relying on the Dharma and our own direct experience, wisdom arises, perfuming deep knowing, and with clear, undistorted seeing we are released from suffering.



Reflection illumnating the Phree Wisdoms

Led by Ratnaguna

6 − 13 July £280 / 252

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

Information is endlessly available to us: where shall Wisdom be found? Harold Bloom

The Three Wisdoms – wisdom through hearing, through reflecting, and through meditating – can be seen either as a progressive sequence or as three different gateways to wisdom. Seen as a sequence, we move from an initial understanding to what the Buddha called a reflective acceptance of a teaching, and from there to a transformative insight into that teaching. Seen as 'gateways', transformative insight can arise through learning from a wise person, through reflecting deeply, or through meditating.

On this retreat Ratnaguna will guide us in practices that will enable us to explore all three wisdoms experientially.

Satipatthan - the Buddha's teaching on Mindfulness

Led by Bodhananda and Tejananda

20 - 29 July £360/324

For people with some experience of Triratna meditation or of mindfulness-based approaches

> One of the most influential of the Buddha's discourses, the Satipatthana Sutta shows how attention to body, feelings and mind with insightful awareness can enable awakening to our true nature and the cessation of suffering, stress and dissatisfaction.

This radically transformative teaching is, according to the Buddha, the direct path to the cessation of suffering. Offering proven approaches that address the alienation, disembodiment and stress which characterise life today, it restores a deep integrity of body, heart, mind and being.

In this retreat, we'll explore the Buddha's original mindfulness teaching that takes awareness, insight 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, MBCT and Breathworks.



Reserved Deeper- energy liberatures Led by the Vajraloka team 10-19 August

10 – 19 Augus £360/324

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

All Buddhist practices are concerned with liberation. On this retreat, we'll focus on small yet reachable liberations – especially those concerned with renewing and deepening your meditation practice.

If your practice seems to have got stuck somewhere, or not to be quite what it was, the Vajraloka team can offer inspiration and very practical advice to help you free yourself from those constraints. If your practice is going well, but you feel it could be going further or deeper, we can offer ways to cut through unconscious views and assumptions that may be holding you back. This can lead to liberations from negative emotions and afflictions, here and now.

And in these moments of freedom, something wonderful could well emerge – love, compassion and deeper confidence in your potential to awaken fully.



Wahe Up - just sit. Led by Rijumitra

24 – 31 August £280/252

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

When asked how to do just sitting, Sangharakshita replied: you just sit. Try this out, however, and it can seem that just sitting is just endless mental rumination. This is prapanca – compulsive, deluded thinking. It can be both frustrating and painful and it certainly isn't what just sitting is about.

On this retreat we'll be exploring some direct and very effective ways to let the proliferation die down so that wakeful, spacious awareness opens up. This fresh wakefulness is what just sitting and receptivity is really about. Once you've discovered how to access it, you really can just sit and wake up to what you are, 'just what is', beyond the prapanca.



Illuminating Sadhara (Order retreat) Led by Rijumitra and Jinapalita 7 – 16 September

£360/324

Open to all Order Members

Sadhana is the main expression of the principle of spiritual rebirth in the Order. During this retreat we will contemplate the evolution of sadhana as an Order practice and explore the stages through which sadhana plays out. As well as being redolent with rich images from the sambhogakaya, sadhana also requires presence, inviting the accomplishment of both tranquillity and insight, shamatha and vipashyana.

We will explore how these qualities relate to the dynamic or unfolding of sadhana, suggesting practical ways of evoking the samayasattva, the imaginal sense of the Buddha or Bodhisattva which we conjure up. And we'll explore the relationship between this and the jnanasattva – the direct, undivided knowing that emerges as the 'illuminated image'.

The retreat will provide an excellent context to engage, or re-engage, with sadhana including plenty of support and inspiration, pujas devoted to various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, silence and one-to-one practice reviews.

The Awahering Heart and the Divine Alades

Led by Rijumitra and Tejananda

21 - 30 September

£360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

This retreat will focus on love, compassion, joy and equanimity, the four 'divine abodes' or brahmaviharas – in the context of cultivating bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is both the heart-response of wisdom to the suffering of living beings everywhere and the urge to realise full awakening for the benefit of all. To support this, we'll also introduce tonglen, the 'giving and receiving' practice which opens the heart to universal compassion.

The divine abodes are also known as the 'boundless states,' because they are inclusive of all living beings without exception. The practices that we'll explore together 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.





The Other Side of Insight Led by Paramananda

5 − 15 October £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.

On this meditation retreat, which will be conducted largely in silence, 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 over thirty years and has a distinctive style that stresses body and heart as keys to opening to the nature of reality.





Led by Rijumitra and Balajit 26 October – 2 November £280/252

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

Metta is seen as a great potential source of happiness in the Buddhist tradition – an openness to and love of life in all its forms – which spontaneously manifests as compassion and joy. Yet, the cultivation of metta can sometimes seem very 'heady', at times forced and dry.

How can our practice of kindly awareness gain fresh inspiration?

On this retreat, we will explore opening to Metta as an innate quality of our body, heart and being – literally embodying love. Becoming and being truly embodied is not just a preliminary practice, but integral to the whole path. We will look at effective ways of deepening into the body and heart – through traditional Triratna meditation practices, simple mindful movement and inquiry based exercises.



Total Immesian Retreat
Led by Tejananda and the Vajraloka tes

Led by Tejananda and the Vajraloka team 9 – 29 November

£700/640*

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

With total immersion in awareness of all our activities, on this retreat we will foster the three trainings of ethics, meditation and wisdom. Ethical sensitivity and kindness in our relations with the community of practitioners on the retreat, and to our whole environment; meditation in and out of the shrine room – meditation as life. And wisdom in the orientations to spiritual death – seeing into the way things really are – which we will introduce as the retreat goes on.

As on all Vajraloka retreats, we'll be spending most of the time in silence, which supports the inner stillness and the deepening of our practice. At the same time, there will be a variety of appropriate input from the team (as well input-free periods to pursue our own practice direction), group sessions and, of course, one to one reviews, ensuring that the retreat unfolds in a way that is appropriate to each individual's particular needs and directions.

*Based on special reduced nightly rate of £35 full, £32 concession



Comparing and Emphress
Led by Tejananda
7-16 December

£360/324

For people with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

Benevolence - metta – together with compassion, joy and equanimity, were taught by the Buddha as boundless liberations of the mind. The familiar practices with 5 or 6 stages are entry points, enabling us to engage with our afflictive emotions - liking, disliking, ignoring - and to uncover the true, unlimited nature of the divine abodes. Liberation of the mind from these afflictions, even if temporary, enables us to return to the nature of the boundless qualities as the Buddha himself taught them: a simple, unbounded radiance.

This, in turn, enables an opening to the progressive contemplation of emptiness. The Buddha's approach, found in the 'Shorter Discourse on Emptiness' and other early texts of the Pali canon, is distinct from the more familiar approaches developed by the Mahayana schools. It is less analytical and more direct and experiential.

During the retreat, we'll explore these wonderful, liberative teachings from a perspective of deep body awareness and in a spirit of open inquiry.

Practice Retreats for Men

Practice Retreats for Men Led by Vajraloka team members

21 - 28 December

28 December - 4 January

£280/252 per week

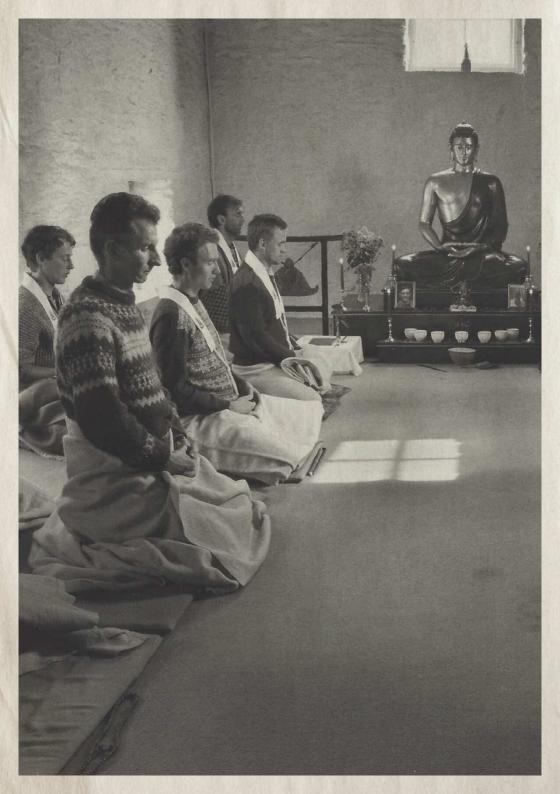
For men with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice

The main feature of these popular men's retreats is that they allow retreatants to follow the themes and rhythms emerging in their own meditation practice. 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 also available on request.







About Vajraloha



A typical guest room in the 80s

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 thirty years. Its location and the facilities that have been developed here greatly support 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 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

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:

7:00am Meditation 8:00am Meditation 9:00am Breakfast

10:30am Meditation / teaching

1:00pm Lunch

3:00pm Work period

4:30pm Meditation / teaching

6:00pm Dinner

6:40pm Practice reviews

7:45pm Meditation / devotional practice

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



Borling 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: www.vajraloka.org

The retreat deposit is £70 and is non-refundable. If you wish to reserve a place with a deposit please do so via the website or send a cheque and booking form by post, and forward the balance within six weeks of the retreat to confirm your booking.

Our concessionary rate is for students, the low-waged and those on Triratna support rates. We also have a retreatant-supported bursary scheme to enable those who can't afford the concessionary rate to come on retreat here. Lack of funds should not exclude anyone who could benefit from a Vajraloka retreat, so do please feel free to enquire about bursaries.

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, but only for medical reasons. Please contact us about this at least ten days before the start of the retreat.



2018 Retreat Calendar

19/01 - 28/01	Simply Being	9 nights	MIXED B
09/02 - 18/02	Ocean of True Meaning	9 nights	MIXED C
23/02 - 02/03	Renew and Deepen	7 nights	MIXED A
	Emptiness and the Heart Sutra	9 nights	MIXED B
	Braĥmaviharas	10 nights	MIXED B
06/04 - 15/04	Dhyana through the Body	9 nights	MIXED B
21/04 - 01/05		11 nights	MIXED C
11/05 - 20/05	Radical Emptiness	9 nights	MIXED B
25/05 - 28/05	Spring Weekend Retreat	3 nights	MIXED A
08/06 - 15/05	Radical Embrace	7 nights	MIXED B
22/06 - 01/07	Uncontrived Mindfulness	9 nights	MIXED B
06/07 - 13/07	Reflection – the Three Wisdoms	7 nights	MIXED B
20/07 - 29/07	Satipatthana	9 nights	MIXED A
10/08 - 19/08	Renew & Deepen	9 nights	MIXED A
24/08 - 31/08	Wake Up – Just Sit	7 nights	MIXED B
	Illuminating Sadhana	9 nights	MIXED C
21/09 - 30/09	Awakening heart & Divine Abodes	9 nights	MIXED B
05/10 - 15/10	The other side of insight	10 nights	MIXED B
26/10 - 02/11	Embodying Love	7 nights	MIXED B
	Total Immersion	20 nights	MIXED B
07/12 - 16/12	Compassion and Emptiness	9 nights	MIXED B
21/12 - 28/12	Practice Retreat	7 nights	MEN B
28/12 - 04/01	Practice Retreat	7 nights	MEN B

A – Some experience of meditation, or of mindfulness-based approaches

B – At least 3 years of regular meditation practice

C - Order members only

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 $Design \ @\ Alokavira, Photos \ @\ Amoghavira, Balajit, Jeremy\ Peters, Prajnagatu\ and\ the\ Vajraloka\ archive.$

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Vajraloka is a centre of the Triratna Buddhist Community