



Vajraloka

Buddhist Meditation Centre

Retreats 2019

Stillness, simplicity, contentment...

The intimate, stark beauty of Sahajatarā's photographic images in this booklet wonderfully evoke the qualities of collective stillness and simplicity which so often emerge in a retreat at Vajraloka. They also hint at a profound contentment, into which practice ultimately deepens.

These words – stillness, simplicity and contentment - will be very familiar to anyone who has been practising in our sangha for any length of time. More than simply the 'positive counterpart' to the third precept, they evoke beautifully the dharma qualities which can emerge on a meditation retreat in such surroundings as Vajraloka.

Stillness and simplicity are qualities which begin to emerge from just arriving and settling into the place itself – with our quiet surroundings and the rough-hewn stone buildings in their natural landscape. Then, the rhythms of the retreat – meditation, meals and simple tasks – help us to let go of whatever concerns we may have brought with us and open up to greater simplicity. And the practice of silence promotes stillness of mind. From here, warm, embodied receptivity and absorbed states of awareness and metta can soon emerge. With these states, we can feel very contented.



But finding a lasting contentment can be trickier. It's straightforward enough as long as things are going well, but what if a day of 'good meditations' is followed by one of dullness, boredom or distraction? Or if there are things or people on the retreat that irritate you? Where is the contentment now, when things are not meeting your hopes or expectations? And yet, becoming aware of your lack of contentment is a crucial moment. Ironically, a sense of discontentment about the imperfections of your situation opens up the perfect opportunity to go deeper. And if we're to find real contentment, we have to go deeper.

This is possible if stillness and simplicity, when they are there, become the foundation for bringing dharma perspectives to our issues, our likes and dislikes. This isn't necessarily easy. It means finding the courage and honesty to acknowledge that our discontentments with whatever life offers us come only from ourselves. Turning towards this truth with compassion and wise attention is what allows the transforming wonder of the dharma to arise in us. This is the real work that Vajraloka and the team here exist to support you in. Plunging into dharma truths experientially is the only way, ultimately, to a true and enduring contentment which doesn't depend on conditions.

The Vajraloka team



Rijumitra, Tejananda, Saccavacaya, Jinapalita & Prajnapiya



Which retreat is for you?

All of our retreats apart from the two Men's Practice Retreats in December are open to all people irrespective of 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 those who have limited experience of meditation or Buddhism in the Triratna context, including those who have been training in 'secular mindfulness' based approaches. These include the two 'Everyday Liberations – renew and deepen' retreats, the 'Spring Weekend Retreat' and 'Satipatthana – the Buddha's teaching on mindfulness'. On these retreats, alongside the main teaching sessions, we can offer individual teaching and support 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 three years of regular meditation practice

The majority of our retreats are suitable for more experienced meditators and three years of practice is a rule of thumb. If you want to discuss the suitability of a retreat in this category for you, please contact us.

Open to all Order Members

These retreats are only open to members of the Triratna Buddhist Order. This year, there is only one Order retreat, 'The Ocean of True Meaning' in November.

If you have any questions, 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. This year, we are building a new block with two further bathrooms which will give us more flexibility.



Mixed Retreats

Dhyana through the Body

Led by Tejananda

18 – 27 January

£405/369

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

If your approach to a meditation practice doesn't seem to be working, do you just carry on as before, hoping that it will improve? It's rather unlikely that this will work!

This is as true of dhyana (absorption) practice as of any other area. So, on this retreat, we'll be suggesting approaches we've found to be helpful and effective in accessing dhyana. This is likely to involve questioning not only our own views and approaches, but some of what the tradition has to say about dhyana. Instead, we'll proceed on the basis of asking "What, in our experience, is and is not actually helpful?"

We have found that by becoming alive to the immediacy of our sensate experience, resources for entering absorption can be discovered right here, already present – just waiting to be noticed. We'll explore this in direct experience by delving into the relation between body and breath, and between body, awareness and metta.

Simply Being

Led by Tejananda


1 – 10 February

£405/369

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

At any moment we can recognise, directly and viscerally, that we are alive and awake. With a settled and embodied awareness, this could open into an intuitive glimpse of what we truly are, beyond concepts. This might be evoked as a spacious yet embodied presence, a timeless awareness-emptiness, or love, compassion and pure energy.

We'll explore this by way of a somatic approach to just sitting meditation together with experiential inquiries – discovering our own direct experience as aliveness, intimacy, simplicity and clarity. These subtle yet accessible qualities of our ordinary mind and being can act as gateways to the five wisdoms or 'undivided awarenesses' (jnanas), which are the essence of the five Buddhas. The mandala of the five Buddhas and their wisdoms offers a very practical map of our immediate experience, pointing to what has simply been here all along, unnoticed.



Uncontrived Mindfulness

Led by Vajradevi, with Tejananda

15 – 24 February


£405/369

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

Sangharakshita has said that we should be aware of our minds at all times – but how can we do this? And what are the benefits to our practice? How can we be aware in a way that doesn't feel contrived and 'added on'?

During this retreat, we'll be using the Buddha's profound words from the Satipatthana Sutta to inform and enliven our own practice of mindfulness as a path to clear seeing. Based on instructions for working with awareness and right view, we'll focus on how we can use mindfulness as a support to wisdom and the end of suffering.

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



The Awakening Heart and the Divine Abodes

Led by Rijumitra and Tejananda


8 – 17 March

£405/369

For people with at least three years regular meditation practice

Bodhicitta – the awakening heart – 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. This retreat will focus on love, compassion, joy and equanimity – the four 'divine abodes' or brahmaviharas – in the context of cultivating bodhicitta. 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 the awakening heart itself.



Everyday Liberations - renew and deepen

Led by members of the Vajraloka team

22 – 31 March

£405/369

For people with some experience of Triratna meditation or of mindfulness-based 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 become stuck, or isn't quite what it was, the Vajraloka team can offer inspiration and helpful practical advice which can enable you to 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.

Spring Weekend Retreat

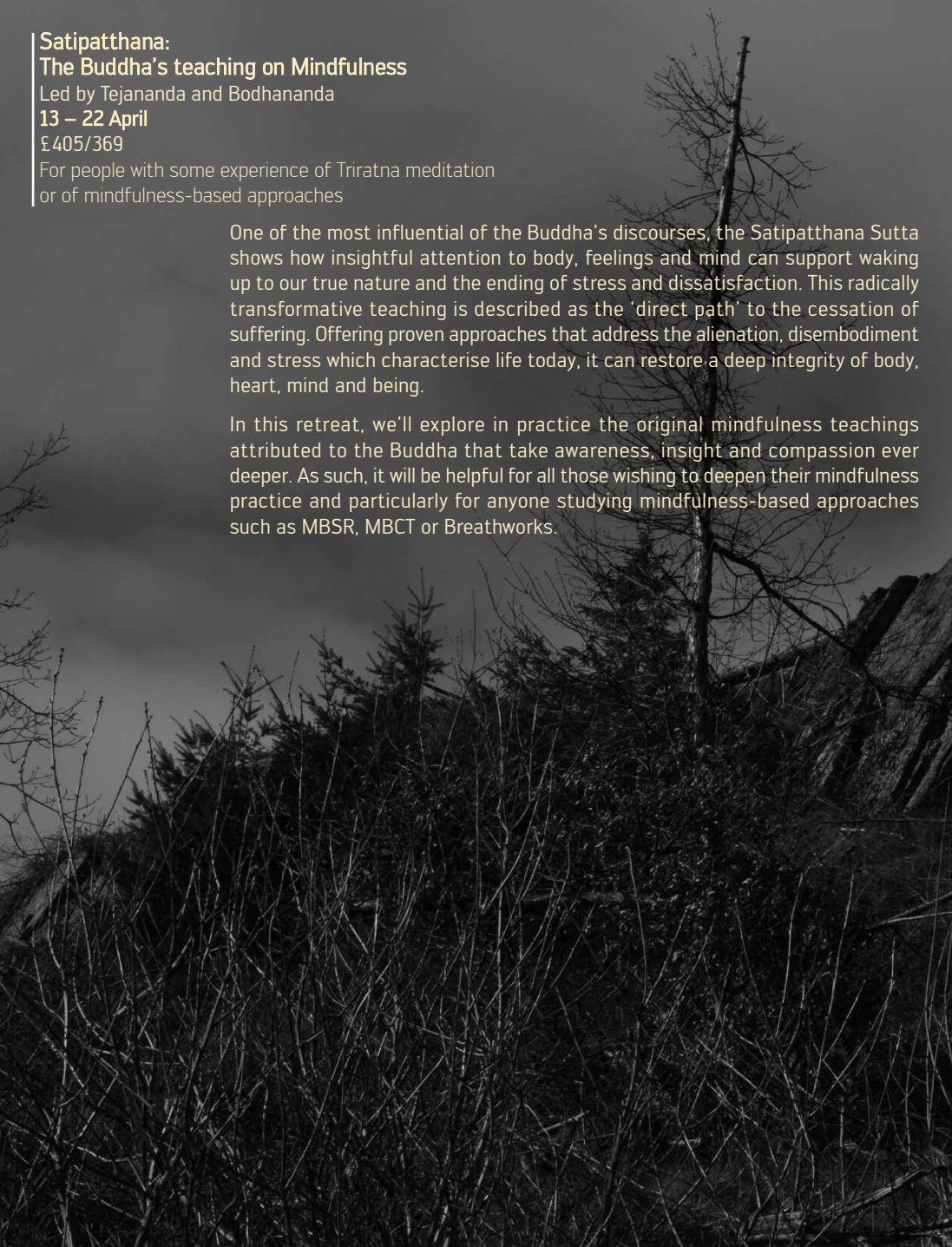
Led by the Vajraloka team

5 – 8 April

£135/123

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 opportunities for discussion and chats with members of the team as well as silent practice – a valuable feature of all our retreats at Vajraloka.



Satipatthana: The Buddha's teaching on Mindfulness

Led by Tejananda and Bodhananda


13 – 22 April

£405/369

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 insightful attention to body, feelings and mind can support waking up to our true nature and the ending of stress and dissatisfaction. This radically transformative teaching is described as the 'direct path' to the cessation of suffering. Offering proven approaches that address the alienation, disembodiment and stress which characterise life today, it can restore a deep integrity of body, heart, mind and being.

In this retreat, we'll explore in practice the original mindfulness teachings attributed to the Buddha that take awareness, insight and compassion ever deeper. As such, it will be helpful for all those wishing to deepen their mindfulness practice and particularly for anyone studying mindfulness-based approaches such as MBSR, MBCT or Breathworks.



The Radical Embrace

Led by Singhashri and Balajit

26 April – 5 May

£315/287


For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

How can we learn to embrace ourselves, others and the world more deeply and radically, with awareness and compassion?

Together we will meet ourselves where we are, with appreciation and curiosity, inviting all our disparate selves into a space of acceptance and presence. We will draw on resources like grounding, nature, simple mindful movements, neuroscience and creative ritual.

We'll explore our capacity to discover and dwell in more expansive qualities of absorption and deepen our confidence to turn towards those places within us that are stuck, restricted and painful.

Doing this, we'll learn to liberate restricted energies, break the spell of false views, and allow them to transform in the clear light of awareness. What emerges is a more authentic experience of our innate ability to connect more deeply with ourselves and others.



Emptiness and the Heart Sutra

Led by Tejananda

10 – 19 May

£405/369

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

There's a great deal of 'emptiness' in the Heart Sutra, The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, who expounds this teaching, declares not only that 'in emptiness there is no form,' but that all the constituents of our psycho-physical being, without exception, are empty. What does this mean? Just what is emptiness? And what does it have to do with our own dharma practice?

These are 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 emptiness is, precisely, compassion.

Embodying Love

Led by Rijumitra and Balajit

24 – 31 May

£315/287

For people with at least three 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.



Simply Being

Led by Tejananda

6 – 15 September

£405/369

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

At any moment we can recognise, directly and viscerally, that we are alive and awake. With a settled and embodied awareness, this could open into an intuitive glimpse of what we truly are, beyond concepts. This might be evoked as a spacious yet embodied presence, a timeless awareness-emptiness, or love, compassion and pure energy.

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In the seen - only the seen

Led by Rijumitra

20 – 29 September

£405/369

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

The wanderer Bahiya was the recipient of one of the Buddha's most well-known and direct teachings: 'Bahiya, train yourself like this – In the seen, there will be only the seen, in the heard, only the heard, in the sensed, only the sensed and in the cognised, only the cognised'.

Upon hearing this, Bahiya woke up fully, becoming an arahant right on the spot. How did these words lead to Bahiya's immediate awakening? And how could we possibly put this teaching into practice ourselves?

During this retreat we will be following in Bahiya's footsteps. By way of meditation, reflection and dialogue, we'll see just what prepared Bahiya to really hear the Buddha's teaching and – most important – what we can bring from this to our own practice. From this could emerge the clarity of mind and heart that allows us to engage with the radical truth of the emptiness of things, so that we too may see what Bahiya saw.

Everyday Liberations – renew and deepen

Led by members of the Vajraloka team

4 – 11 October


£315/287

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 become stuck, or isn't quite what it was, the Vajraloka team can offer inspiration and helpful practical advice which can enable you to 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.



Compassion and Emptiness

Led by Tejananda

18 – 27 October

£405/369

For people with at least three 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 five or six 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 afflictions, even if temporary, enables us to return to the boundless qualities as the Buddha himself taught them: simple, unlimited, radiant.

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.

The Brahnaviharas – a complete path

Led by Rijumitra

8 – 17 November

£405/369

For people with at least three 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 give you the tools to turn towards experience and embrace it with the love and responsiveness of the Brahnaviharas.

We will engage with the Brahnaviharas drawing out both their active and receptive components and show how they can be a complete path to awakening.



The Ocean of True Meaning (Order retreat)

Led by Vessantara

22 November – 1 December

£405/369

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 Wangchug Dorje, the ninth Karmapa, in the sixteenth century, goes deeply into the practicalities of the whole path to Awakening. Following on from the successful retreat on this text here in 2018, Vessantara will continue his exploration of the shamatha and vipashyana sections, unpacking their riches and how they can enhance the main Order practices, through presentations and guided meditations. (This retreat is suitable both for those who attended last year and those who didn't.)

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

Wake Up – Just Sit

Led by Rijumitra

7 – 14 Dec

£315/287

For people with at least three years of regular meditation practice

When asked how to do just sitting, Sangharakshita replied: you just sit.

While this remark is undoubtedly on the nail, for many the practice of just sitting, can seem to be 'just' endless mental rumination. This is prapanca – compulsive, deluded thinking – which definitely isn't just sitting, nor what Sangharakshita's remark was getting at.

How then to approach this apparently very simple practice? 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' just sit, alive to what you are and 'just what is', beyond the prapanca.



Practice Retreats for Men

Practice Retreats for men

Led by Vajraloka team members

20 – 27 Dec

27 Dec – 3 Jan

£315/287 per week

For men with at least three 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.



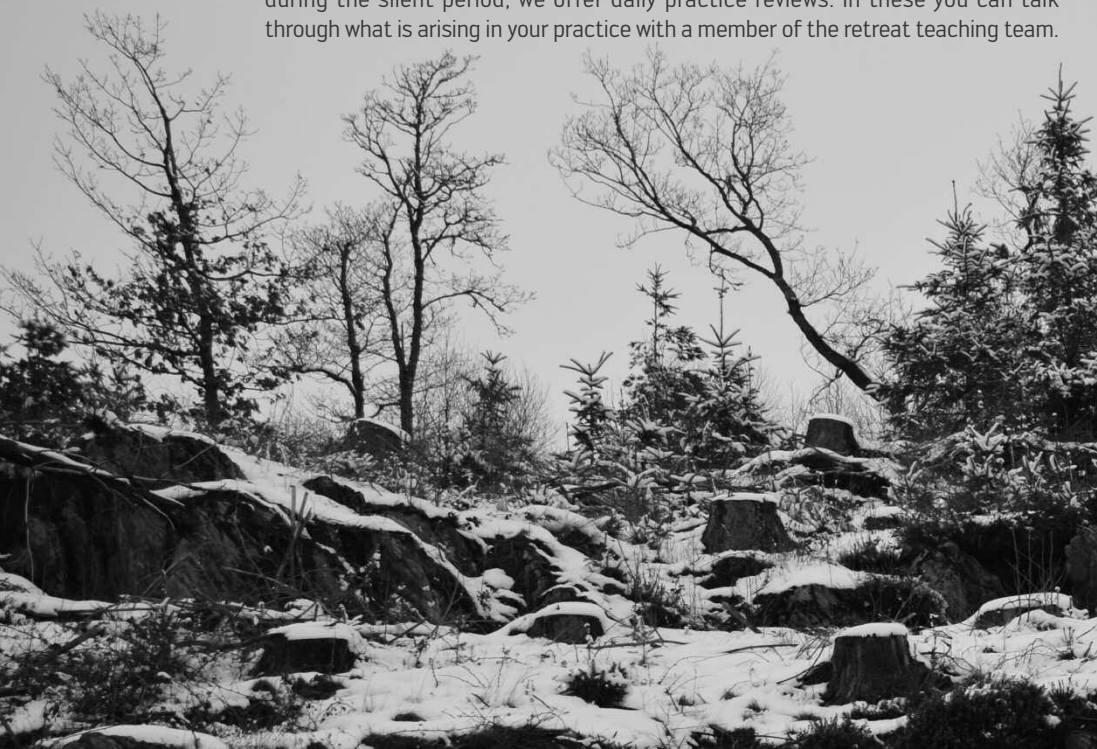
About Vajraloka

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 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 and guest cooks serve up delicious and nutritious vegan food – we are delighted that Vajraloka is now a fully vegan retreat centre.

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:

7.00	Meditation
8.00	Meditation
9.00	Breakfast
10.30	Meditation / teaching
1.00	Lunch
3.00	Working meditation
4.30	Meditation / teaching
6.00	Dinner
6.40	Practice reviews
7.45	Meditation / devotional practice

On the final day, our retreats finish around 9.30 am.
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: www.vajraloka.org

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 send the balance at least six weeks before the start 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, and please contact us about this at least ten days before the start of the retreat.

2019 RETREAT CALENDAR

18/01 – 27/01	Dhyana through the Body	9 nights	MIXED	B
01/02 – 10/02	Simply Being	9 nights	MIXED	B
15/02 – 24/02	Uncontrived Mindfulness	9 nights	MIXED	B
08/03 – 17/03	Awakening Heart & Divine Abodes	9 nights	MIXED	B
22/03 – 31/03	Everyday Liberations	9 nights	MIXED	A
05/04 – 08/04	Spring Weekend Retreat	3 nights	MIXED	A
13/04 – 22/04	Satipatthana	9 nights	MIXED	A
26/04 – 05/05	The Radical Embrace	7 nights	MIXED	B
10/05 – 19/05	Emptiness & the Heart Sutra	9 nights	MIXED	B
24/05 – 31/05	Embodying Love	7 nights	MIXED	B
01/06 – 05/09		CLOSED		
06/09 – 15/09	Simply Being	9 nights	MIXED	B
20/09 – 29/09	In the seen, only the seen	9 nights	MIXED	B
04/10 – 11/10	Everyday Liberations	7 nights	MIXED	A
18/10 – 27/10	Compassion and Emptiness	9 nights	MIXED	B
08/11 – 17/11	Brahmaviharas	9 nights	MIXED	B
22/11– 01/12	The Ocean of True Meaning	9 nights	MIXED	C
07/12 – 14/12	Wake Up – Just Sit	7 nights	MIXED	B
20/12 – 27/12	Practice Retreat	7 nights	MEN	B
27/12– 03/01	Practice Retreat	7 nights	MEN	B

- A - Some experience of meditation, or of mindfulness-based approaches
 B - At least three years of regular practice
 C - Order members only

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is a centre of the Triratna Buddhist Community