

# Information for Guests at Dhammapala Monastery

Dhammapala is a sanctuary for spiritual development and the residency of a monastic community in the tradition of early Buddhism (Theravāda) as found today mainly in the countries of Southeast Asia, such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. More specifically it follows a tradition inspired by the Thai forest monk Venerable Ajahn Chah and his first Western disciple, Ajahn Sumedho.

Being a Buddhist monastery, Dhammapala is primarily the residence of our monastic community. We organize group events for lay people and also welcome you as temporary guests; provided you are willing to abide by the monastic discipline and participate in work, meditation and other communal activities during your entire stay. By doing so you can make an important contribution to the support of our community.

As the foundation of our life together, everyone staying in the monastery undertakes to follow some level of precepts. These can act as guidelines for reflection, bringing deeper awareness into our relationship both to each other and to material things and so become a basis for liberating insight. They also provide a shared basis of trust in how we live together.

During their stay guests are expected to observe the Eight Precepts and to fully participate in all community activities (see schedule below) which regularly includes a three-hour work period in the morning, attending the communal formal meditation periods and joining in with the daily meal.

**Please note that we do not offer facilities for purely personal retreats. Guests are expected to join in with the monastery activities.**



## THE EIGHT PRECEPTS

### **I HARMLESSNESS - To refrain from intentionally destroying any living creatures**

This means to refrain from *deliberately* causing harm to human beings or animals, even insects; unintentional harm (i.e. accidentally stepping on an ant) would not be breaking the precept.

### **II TRUSTWORTHINESS - To refrain from taking that which is not given**

This involves care and respect for tools and any other material things around us – those belonging to the monastery, to others and our own possessions.

### **III CHASTITY - To refrain from any kind of sexual activity**

An important aspect of spiritual practice is the transformation of energy. This precept refers specifically to sexual energy which can be transformed into 'heart energy'. To support this process, our training in the community requires that everyone's behaviour respects the practice of celibacy. For lay guests, while you are here you should avoid cultivating intimate relationships. This means avoiding physical contact or actively seeking out the company of anyone to whom you may feel sexually attracted. Even in speech, it is important to be sensitive to time, place and topic, not creating or

furthering situations in which sexual attraction may arise.

#### **IV RIGHT SPEECH - To refrain from incorrect speech**

This means to refrain from lying, swearing, gossiping, harsh speech and needless chatter. In other words learning to be silent when there is nothing in particular to say! Noble silence is one of the most helpful restraints in developing mindfulness. Make an effort to watch how conversations affect mindfulness. Take time for solitude. This helps us to develop deeper truthfulness in ourselves and refines our ability to listen to others so that self centeredness can begin to fall away. This precept can also be extended to include respect and sensitivity to the silence and space we share here.

#### **V A CLEAR MIND - To refrain from intoxicating drinks or drugs which lead to carelessness**

Consumption of even small quantities of alcohol is not permissible. Tea, coffee as well as drugs taken on prescription are fine. You are encouraged to stop smoking while you are here and it is **strictly prohibited** to do so inside of the building and in its immediate surroundings.

#### **VI RENUNCIATION - To refrain from eating at inappropriate times**

According to our renunciant tradition, the 'proper' time for taking food is between dawn and midday (1.00 pm summer time). We ask that guests follow this observance. In addition to breakfast and a large meal served in the morning, drinks and allowable refreshments are made available at teatime.

If there is some medical reason that makes it impossible for you to follow this, please let the guest monk know before your visit; he will be happy to advise you about a suitable arrangement.

#### **VII SENSE RESTRAINT - To refrain from entertainment, beautification and adornment**

In support of this principle, we strongly discourage all use of electronic devices. Entertainment includes the use of musical instruments, as well as singing, dancing, sports, games, music, and other dispersing activities. We encourage our guests to make the most of this opportunity to live simply. 'Refraining from beautification and adornment' means refraining from trying to make yourself pleasant to others' eyes with the aim to cause attraction of any kind. We ask our guests to wear clothing that reflects respect for modesty. Trousers, skirts, and dresses should cover the knees; loose-fitting clothes are suitable. We appreciate personal cleanliness but at the same time would like to ask you not to use perfume, cosmetics and jewellery.

#### **VIII MODERATION - To refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place**

This means to refrain from over-indulgence in sleep. Initially during one's stay it may be necessary to rest in order to unwind, but after settling in, all guests should follow the daily routine.



Bhikkhus (monks) live under similar, but more detailed, precept structures. This training brings together Dhamma and discipline. It is both worthy of respect and affects in a very immediate and practical way how we live and work together in the monastery. You might experience the upholding of the Eight Precepts as a challenge at times; we like to encourage you to see them as guidelines for support to help you live your life in a more wholesome way.

The Buddha laid down the original discipline for the Sangha to support individual insight, communal harmony, encouragement and inspiration for others. As such, our precepts, at whatever level, are meditation in themselves. As we interact and work together, we can each find ways of refining our understanding and practice of Dhamma.



### DAILY ROUTINE

The day begins and ends with silent contemplation together; there are also periods of working meditation, time for individual practice and attending to your personal needs. Following such a routine can be an excellent support for cultivating awareness and applying it to your daily life.

**5:30 am:** Morning pūjā – silent meditation and chanting (meditation hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)

**6:30 am:** Meet in the sala downstairs for chores (daily clean-up)

**7:15 am:** Breakfast

**8:30 am:** Working meditation period – chores and general maintenance of the monastery, meal preparation, etc.

Meal Offering – from Nov–March: **11:00 am**

from April–Oct: **11:30 am**

After the meal, washing up and tidying in the kitchen, followed by personal practice – individual meditation and study time.

**5:00 pm:** Tea

**7:30 pm:** Evening pūjā – chanting and meditation (meditation hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)

There are no morning or evening pūjās on “Wandertag” or Quiet days.

The Evening pūjā on Saturdays starts at 7:30 pm and is usually followed by a Dhamma-talk or Dhamma discussion.

### BOOKING A VISIT

If you would like to visit, please contact the monastery office. Bookings for overnight stays are only accepted by snail mail or e-mail; please attach a completed and signed registration form. It is not possible to make bookings over the telephone. Please check our website for actual information first.

First-time visitors can usually stay at Dhammapala Monastery for up to a week after attending an introductory weekend. It is not possible to stay immediately after the introductory weekend. (Exceptions may be considered for international visitors). If you are booking with us for the first time, please provide a description of your previous experience with Buddhism, meditation, retreats, and other monasteries you have visited, etc.

Arrival days are Monday and Friday. The minimum stay is 3 nights. Weekend stays are available from Friday to Sunday.

Kandersteg is easily accessible by train. A local taxi <https://afataxi.ch> can be ordered by calling +41 75 415 15 15 at least half an hour before arrival (cost approx. CHF 50. for 1-4 persons). Directions and an interactive map can be found on our website: <https://dhammapala.ch/contact-info/>.

**Please bring with you:**

- Working clothes, towel and toiletries, alarm clock, sturdy shoes
- Bed linen: duvet cover, bed sheet and pillowcase (to relieve the monastery community and reduce costs). For hygienic reasons, **please do not bring sleeping bags.**
- House shoes (as outdoor shoes are not worn inside the monastery)
- Alarm clock
- Accommodation is usually single in a shared room (2 to 4 beds, some with bunk beds). The room plan is displayed in the entrance corridor. There is a cloakroom with shoe racks at the end of the corridor (sign: "Garderobe"). Please settle into your allocated room and then follow the daily routine.

Guests are not provided with internet access. It is best to leave your electronic devices at home. For emergencies, there is a public hotspot at the tourist office in the village.

Guests are asked to clean their rooms on departure. The next guest will find the room as you left it.

The monastery, being a place for spiritual development, serves to cultivate an atmosphere of peacefulness, cooperation and going inwards. This is supported by the mutual respect and consideration among the members of the community and its guests.

**The community reserves the right to ask uncooperative guests to leave**, and to refuse accommodation to those who show up without prior reservation.

## HOW GUESTS CAN SUPPORT THE MONASTERY

The maintenance of Dhammapala Monastery is based on the principle of dāna (Pāli for 'gift'), or voluntary giving. Dana, the culture of giving, is praised in the Buddha's teachings as an important aspect of spiritual practice - both for the development of one's own mind and for the material sustenance of the Sangha and the maintenance of places of practice for all.

It is an ancient tradition in Buddhism for lay people to provide for the material needs of monks and nuns who live according to their monastic rule and who, among other things, have no financial resources of their own, do not use money, and have few personal possessions. It is also traditional for monastic communities to provide a place for interested people to deepen and implement the Buddha's teachings and to give instructions on how to practise them, whether in the form of a day visit, a longer stay or a course.

We ask you to bear in mind that the material expenses which make the existence of our monastery and the monastic community (and thus your stay with us) possible are not insignificant. The daily expenses for guests, including tourist tax, amount to at least 15 Swiss francs per person. We are therefore grateful for donations of food, utensils, and money. The monastery does not buy food (except for the courses). For food donations during your stay, local grocery stores (e.g., Coop, Volg, TopShop) are available. Thank you very much!

If you would like to support us on a regular basis, you can do so by setting up a standing order to the Dhammapala Trust or by food order delivery. For more information, please visit our website at <https://dhammapala.ch/dana/>. You will also find a list of items required at the bottom of the page.

*May these guidelines help to make your stay at Dhammapala as pleasant and fruitful as possible.*