

Solitary Retreats

“I implore everyone who is inspired in our lineage to do a solitary retreat. It is a very important step in your practice for you to do so. Our lineage is a householder lineage that goes back to India, and they all did solitary retreats during different cycles of the year. A solitary retreat can bring about a maturation of practice and understanding that might take many years of daily meditation while living an ordinary life.”

– Reggie Ray

Options for Retreat Locations

There are three general types of solitary retreat situations:

- Cabins where you bring all your own supplies/food. This is the most traditional and recommended situation, where you are far away from people, familiar surroundings and habitual patterns.
- Rooms or Cabins where there is a central support building/staff and meals are provided.
- An “in house” retreat in your home (turning off phones, computers, etc.)

Overview of Logistics

- The retreat location will provide you with specific information about what you need to bring for the site, such as bedding, shrine supplies, etc.
- Ensure to bring enough supplies of food, clothing, and basic necessities so as not to create unnecessary mental distractions.
- For long retreats you may arrange delivery of fresh food supplies at points during the retreat. Some retreat locations will do this for a fee. In other situations you arrange with a friend/sangha to do this task and you arrange a way for the delivery to take place without making contact.
- Make sure that you have tied up loose ends, taken care of email and phone contact needs, etc. before you begin retreat so that you do not feel pulled out of the container by daily concerns.

Arrival and Settling In

- Give yourself some time to arrive and settle into the space. Creating a strong container for your practice is a very powerful support for your solitary retreat. Invoking the lineage and protectors to be present with you during your retreat can be very sustaining.
- You might need to sleep more the first couple of days. We are often more exhausted than we realize from the busyness of our modern lives. After a few days you may notice that your energy stabilizes.

Daily Schedule

- The typical recommendation is to practice 8 hours a day, much like a Dathun situation.
- Depending on your personal situation, create a rough structure that works for you. Below is a possible suggested schedule.

7 – 8 am Morning Chants, Sitting

8 - 9 am Breakfast

9 – Noon Practice

Noon – 2:30 Lunch/Rota/Rest

2:30 – 4:30 Practice

4:30 – 5 pm Tea

5:00 – 6:30 Practice; Protector Chants

6:30 – 7:30 Supper

7:30 – 8:30 Practice; Evening Chants

Practice Guidelines

- Your practice sessions will include a combination of Shamatha-Vipashyana, Bodywork, and Walking Meditation (and Ngöndro, Mahamudra or Sadhana practice if you are doing those practices). You may practice indoors or outdoors.
- You may have a certain planned schedule but you also need to listen to what is needed in the moment. “Not too loose, not too tight” is a helpful reminder.
- Solitary means solitary. Although there may be people nearby or you may encounter people on a walk you don’t engage with them. This is a wonderful opportunity to become one’s own best friend.
- Reggie has advised “when things get stale, do something different”. Also he suggests that “bodywork helps open up stale Qi (energy) if you’ve been sitting a lot; it keeps things moving.”

Meditation Instructor Meeting

Depending on your location and situation it might be possible to arrange for a Meditation Instructor meeting at the beginning or part-way through the retreat. This is often very helpful on a first retreat.

Books/Talks

You might take a very limited selection of reading or audio listening on retreat – likely either books by Reggie or Chogyam Trungpa or recordings from one of Reggie’s programs. You might also decide to go on retreat without any books or recordings; “the phenomenal world is all the books one needs”.