

Staying at Vimutti Monastery

Reflecting on purpose of visit

Vimutti is, first and foremost, a monastery where Venerable Monks reside and take on monastic training in accordance with the Dhamma-Vinaya (the Teachings and Code of monastic discipline as laid down by the Buddha).

Guests who wish to participate in the monastic way of life and are willing to adapt to the routine and discipline are welcome, subject to the monastic community's discretion.

The monastery is **not** designed to serve as a retreat centre, spiritual guest house, wellness institution or transit dwelling. Instead, guests who are considering staying at the monastery should regard it as a special and privileged opportunity to be immersed in the disciplined way of life of traditional forest monks, gaining insight and learning from the experience.

As the teachers of the Thai Forest Tradition emphasise: in monastic life, qualities like co-operation, respect and selfless service are essential both for communal harmony and individual growth in the Buddha-Dhamma practice.

Lay guests are invited to focus and give priority to:

- participating in the [Daily Routine](#) at Vimutti,
- giving support and assistance to the Venerable Monks,
- practising the Buddha Dhamma, and
- actively being part of the resident lay community to help with the maintenance and upkeep of the monastery.

Time for personal meditation or retreat periods needs to be thoughtfully integrated with the primary focus and priority outlined above, which should always be given precedence.

The monastery would not suit lay guests who want to pursue their personal retreats or their own meditation practices at Vimutti.

Participating in monastery routine

If you'd like to stay as a lay guest, we ask you to strictly follow the [Daily Routine](#) of the monastery, and join in with all communal meetings and work activities. (Note: The daily schedule for specific Vimutti-organised retreats, e.g. the New Year's Retreat, will differ as such retreats involve a structured programme of sitting and walking meditation.)

Except for Silent Mondays, all lay residents would be expected to attend the daily morning puja-meditation sitting session with the monks from 5.45 to 6.45 am and the evening puja-meditation from 6.00 pm.

Guests are kindly expected to attend the daily morning meetings, held right after breakfast in the Sala or Shrine Room. This gathering forms a vital part of the daily schedule, as it would usually be the only opportunity for all lay residents and monks to meet and communicate with each other.

Each morning, daily work chores are thoughtfully discussed and assigned during the morning meeting, taking individual abilities into account. These tasks may include general cleaning, tending to the monastery grounds, and undertaking simple repairs and maintenance of buildings and facilities. The work period typically runs from 8:00 to 10:00 am. As the monastery functions entirely on the generosity of donations, much of its upkeep is conscientiously carried out by lay residents and volunteers, embodying the spirit of selfless service and giving.

Lay guests have ample time each day (particularly in the afternoons) for study and meditation practice. The Venerable Monks may be approached for advice and general guidance (e.g. after breakfast meetings or lunch dana, or by appointment).

Applications from newcomers to meditation: such applications are generally given stronger consideration if applicants have attended, or plan to align their proposed visit/stay with, one of the monthly Meditation Workshops.

Please kindly allow for **about one week** to receive a response regarding the status of your application. Given the timing for responding, Vimutti would also recommend submitting your application with **dates at least 7 to 8 days in advance of your intended arrival.**

The Eight Precepts

This is the basic standard for guests staying at the monastery.

Sila, or ethical behaviour, is an essential foundation for the development of mindfulness, clear comprehension and meditation. All monastery residents are expected to abide by all eight training precepts:

- To refrain from killing living beings (including insects but not plants)
- To refrain from taking things that were not given to you
- To refrain from all sexual activity
- To refrain from unskilful speech, such as telling lies
- To refrain from consuming alcohol or recreational drugs

- To refrain from eating food after midday
- To refrain from using entertainment such as music, dance and playing games, and from beautifying or adorning the body with jewelry or makeup
- To refrain from sleeping on luxurious beds

Monastery lifestyle

Life in Vimutti encourages development of simplicity, renunciation and quietude.

Meals

There are two daily meals: breakfast and lunch. All monastery residents take The Eight Precepts, so there is no eating after mid-day, no evening meal, except for afternoon allowables that are shared. Lay guests are expected to eat in the common dining area, and are discouraged from keeping or eating food in their kutis/huts.

Food for breakfast and lunch are donations and alms offered by supporters of the monastery, and we would not know what or how much food would be offered. You are welcome to bring your own food for offering to the monks and sharing with lay residents.

If you have any special dietary requirements, you would want to bring the items you need.

Afternoon allowables

Some food items are allowable in the afternoon if you find that your energy is getting too low. These are cheese, dark chocolate and candied ginger, in addition to juice, tea, honey and coffee. Some residents do not take afternoon allowables, as part of their training of renunciation. If you need them, we suggest that you bring your own supply and share them with others. There is a communal supply of tea, coffee and cocoa, but guests are also welcome to bring their own.

Accommodation

Lay residents stay in *kutis* (basic meditation huts) and share communal showers and toilets. Kutis are assigned to approved guests upon arrival and are not hired out.

Before leaving, guests are expected to do everything necessary to ensure that the next guest gets to enjoy clean and tidy accommodation and bathroom facilities.

Talking

While in residence at the monastery, you are encouraged to observe silence as a way to cultivate mindfulness practice. Guests should aim to minimise or avoid idle chatter and *tiracchānakathā* or pointless talk as advised in the words of the Buddha in [Samyutta Nikaya \(SN 56.10\)](#).

Guests can engage in noble conversation (*ariyakathā*) about the Dhamma-Vinaya, but the focus would be on creating an environment that supports inner peace and insight to make the most of their valuable time at the monastery.

Internet and gadgets

Please **do not bring electronic gadgets** like notebooks, tablets, headphones and earbuds with you. These things create a worldly atmosphere which impinges on the simple, meditative lifestyle in the monastery.

Whilst you might find it necessary to bring your mobile phone, you are encouraged to keep the phone turned off and restrict its use to a bare minimum. Internet access will be seriously limited at the monastery, and guests should be prepared to intentionally avoid or significantly reduce online access so as to give more attention to mindfulness practice.

Smoking and fires

Guests are prohibited from smoking and lighting fires of any kind, including incense sticks and candles, due to the risk of fire.

Coming and going

Guests are expected to be on site at the monastery **continuously** during their stay, except in urgent circumstances. If there is a need to leave the monastery for some reason, you will need to seek permission from the Guest Monk. As well, for safety reasons, the monastery needs to know the number and whereabouts of guests staying at the monastery at any point of time.

Dana

The Sangha of the Forest Tradition offers teachings, accommodation and food freely without charge, and Vimutti relies entirely on donations to pay for running and maintenance costs of the monastery. Financial support is, therefore, much appreciated.

In keeping with the spirit of *dana*, or generosity, you may wish to consider how you might contribute to the needs of the monastery.

When you can visit

Vimutti generally welcomes lay guests throughout the year, especially guests who wish to support the monastery and the monastic community and, at the same time, deepen their own practice.

The exception is during *Vassa* or the Rains Retreat, which is the time when monastics intensify their practice and have their own silent retreats. *Vassa* usually starts in mid-July and ends in mid-October. You would want to ensure that the period of stay you are applying for is not during *Vassa*.

What to bring

Bring appropriate clothing and shoes to be prepared for all types of weather – it might be a good idea to check the weather forecast. You can consider bringing:

- a torch/flashlight/headlamp (this is really essential to have at night; some of these may be available to be borrowed if you are unable to bring them)
- a blanket or throw (it can be cold meditating early morning in the yurt)
- a sleeping bag or blankets; a set of sheets if not bringing a sleeping bag; pillow and pillowcase
- toiletries, towel and face cloth and, to help conserve water as we use collected rainwater, a plastic cup for brushing your teeth and a plastic bowl to place in the sink for washing your face
- loose-fitting shirts and pants/skirts that cover arms & knees, in muted colours, for meditating in the yurt/Sala, and preferably made of quiet fabrics (for example, cotton instead of nylon)
- warm clothing and rain gear
- sturdy boots/shoes for outdoors (especially in case of wet weather and muddy areas)
- jandals/flip flops/sandals, for taking on and off easily when entering indoor spaces
- a sun hat and sunscreen, water bottle and/or thermal flask
- meditation cushion/stool or meditation mat for use in your kuti/dwelling. The monastery has these items, but they are for use only in the yurt/Sala

Most importantly, please bring an attitude of being easy to look after, not fussy or complaining, but content and grateful for the opportunity to practise the Dhamma.

How to apply to stay

It is advisable that you read through the above information to be clear about your obligations before you decide to put in an application.

For first-time guests, the recommended **minimum stay is three days**, and **maximum is one week** with the permission of the Guest Monk. But if you are coming from overseas, and particularly if you have extensive experience at other monasteries of the Forest Tradition, we may be able to be more flexible about dates and durations of stay.

Accommodation space can be limited at times, so you would want to plan your stay well in advance. We ask that you submit your application at least **a week** prior to your intended date of arrival. Due to resource constraints, we may not be able to process applications at shorter notice, and the chance that these applications cannot be accepted is high.

We recommend that you plan to **arrive within the following times** unless you are flying into Auckland (in which case, after your application has been approved, please email us to make specific time arrangements):

- between 10:30am and 12:30pm, or
- between 5:30pm and 6:30pm

Note:

1. Vimutti gate opens at 8:00 am and shuts at 7:00 pm daily.
2. If you are arriving around 10:30 am, you can participate in the lunch dana starting at 11:00 am and bring alms food to offer to the monks.
3. If you are arriving around 5:30pm, please join the evening puja and meditation from 6:00pm.
4. We normally cannot accept arrivals later than 6.30 pm.

With the aim of creating a safe and welcoming environment for all guests, you are required to complete the [Vimutti Guest Form and Questionnaire](#). Amongst other things, this application form will ask you to state the purpose of your stay, meditation experience and the condition of your physical and mental health. Your completed form will be directed to the Guest Monk. A new form is necessary for every visit.