

## **Vimutti Guest Information**

Vimutti Buddhist Monastery is located on 144 beautiful acres of green rolling hills and valleys near the small town of Bombay, New Zealand, 30km south of Auckland. Vimutti is a monastery devoted to the training of monks and lay people in the Forest Tradition of Theravada Buddhism. It is not primarily a retreat or meditation center, however periodically we do hold residential retreats and offer meditation workshops. Guests are welcome to visit for the day or arrange to stay a period of time, sharing in the lifestyle of the monastic community.

### **Dana**

In keeping with our tradition there is no charge for anything at Vimutti. The monastery is supported entirely by voluntary donations in the form of food, supplies, materials, money, books and work. While there is no obligatory charge to stay, guests may want to consider how they might contribute to the needs of maintaining the monastery. Developing the virtues of generosity, gratitude and kindness are essential qualities that support the practice of mental cultivation. The current facilities exist because of the generosity of people in the past. Generosity in the present creates the opportunity for others to practice the Dhamma in the future.

### **The Eight Precepts**

Lay guests who stay at Vimutti Buddhist Monastery abide by the traditional ethical standard known as the eight precepts:

1. Harmlessness: To refrain from intentionally harming any human or animal, including insects.
2. Trustworthiness: To refrain from stealing or taking anything that is not given to you. This includes making use of supplies in the monastery unless they have been specified for your use, for example, taking food from the kitchen outside the mealtime.
3. Celibacy: To refrain from all romantic and sexual behavior. Please avoid any physical contact with, or going on private walks with, the opposite sex (or same sex if lesbian, gay or bisexual).

4. Honesty: To refrain from lying. It is encouraged to speak sparingly and mindfully, saying that which is true, beneficial, kind, meaningful and harmonious.
5. Sobriety: To refrain from alcohol, recreational drugs and other intoxicants that cloud clarity.
6. Renunciation: To refrain from eating after midday. The monastery's practice is to eat one main meal a day plus a light breakfast. After midday, some drinks and other items are allowable (see below). This practice frees time for meditation and enhances simplicity of life.
7. Restraint: To refrain from entertainment, beautification and adornment; for example, music, dancing, playing games, jewelry, make-up or perfume. This encourages taking one's attention off the superficial and focusing the mind's attention inwards towards the Dhamma.
8. Alertness: To refrain from using luxurious beds, in order to encourage wakefulness and contentment with simplicity.

These training precepts are guidelines for good conduct in body and speech. They provide a moral foundation for the development of mindfulness and clear comprehension in meditation and in every activity throughout the day. The precepts also serve to promote harmony within the community through restraining unwholesome speech and action. These fundamental principles of training cultivate the self-discipline and purity of action necessary for spiritual development. Our Dhamma practice includes all aspects of daily life, however simple and ordinary, as opportunities to develop mindfulness and other spiritual qualities: kindness, respect, effort, joy, contentment, faith, and patience. In time, the virtuous qualities that grow within such training gather strength and contribute towards deeper inner peace. This in turn fosters insight: a gradually deepening understanding of the nature of reality, our place within it and the causes of pain and happiness. The Buddha's path then culminates in the liberating wisdom of enlightenment.

### **Daily Schedule**

Guests must participate in all aspects of the daily routine, including the morning and evening group meditations, Dhamma instruction, chanting, chores, a three hour work period, tea meditation and days of silent retreat.

The daily schedule changes throughout the week and year, but a typical day would include:

Morning meditation and chanting

Breakfast

Main meal, clean-up and Dhamma discussion

Work period

Tea

Evening meditation and chanting

Dhamma reflection

### **Coming and Going**

A monastery is a sanctuary from the usual worldly concerns for those who have dedicated themselves to spiritual practice. Guests at Vimutti share the lifestyle of the community, so it is not appropriate to come and go without notice or to engage in external business during their stay. We ask guests to take care of all business and travel arrangements prior to arrival and agree to stay in the monastery for the duration of their visit.

### **Food and Lodgings**

As Vimutti Monastery survives solely on the donations of others, we accept whatever food is offered on any particular day with gratitude. Because of this we are not able to accommodate special dietary needs. However, there is usually an abundance and variety of healthy food. If you need to eat in the afternoon for health reasons, it may not be suitable to stay at the monastery.

One of the traditions of Forest Monasteries is to accept whatever lodging one is offered with an attitude of contentment and gratitude. At Vimutti, the guest lodgings are simple huts or caravans with bathing facilities located in the central area. Men and women stay in separate areas of the monastery. Under no circumstances should a guest go into the dwelling of a person of the opposite sex without express permission of the senior monk.

### **Recommended Items to Bring**

- jandals/flip flops/sandals for taking on and off easily when entering indoor spaces
- a sleeping bag or blankets
- a set of sheets if not bringing a sleeping bag
- pillow case
- towel and face cloth

- toiletries
- torch/flashlight
- alarm clock
- sturdy work boots/shoes
- work clothes
- warm clothing and rain gear for Autumn through Spring.
- it is helpful but not necessary to bring work gloves, a sun hat and sunscreen.
- plastic cup for brushing your teeth and a plastic bowl to place in the sink for washing your face.
- meditation cushion, bench or meditation mat for use in your dwelling. The monastery has these items, but they are for use in the meditation hall only.
- Most importantly, please bring an attitude of being easy to look after, not fussy or complaining, but content and grateful for the opportunity to practice the Dhamma.

### **Technology**

To help maintain the monastery as a haven of tranquility, simplicity and solitude, guests are asked to leave their laptop computers or tablets at home and to refrain from using their cell phones for calls or email during their stay. This policy encourages peace and contemplation. It may also expose addiction to electronic devices. If it is absolutely necessary to use a monastery telephone or computer for a departure arrangement or an emergency, first ask the guest monk or a senior monk for permission.

### **Appropriate Dress and Appearance**

A Buddhist monastery is a sanctuary of spiritual devotion where we have the rare opportunity to focus our minds on the path leading towards the highest happiness. Out of respect for this noble aspiration as well as the traditional customs of Asia, we request that you dress modestly when visiting. Loose fitting, comfortable clothing is recommended. Please do not go bare-chested or wear revealing, tight fitting or suggestive clothing: including shorts, short skirts, low cut neck lines, halter-tops or tank-tops.

- When not working, and especially inside buildings and dwellings, please wear clothes that are clean and presentable.
- Men should shave regularly.

- Men or women with long hair are asked to tie it back.
- Please remove your shoes before entering the main buildings and your dwelling.
- Please do not wear any jewellery, including that for piercings.
- When not working, we request that guests wear the traditional monastic dress of a white shirt and black bottoms (pants for men and long skirts or pants for women). The reasons for this are:
  1. To conform to the contemporary and ancient standard of forest monasteries.
  2. To de-emphasise external expressions of self and ego. Clothes can be one way of reinforcing personal identity, so in monasteries people wear clothes appropriate for taking the emphasis off of sensuality and individuality.
  3. To help to differentiate between visitors and lay guests.
  4. As a test of letting go. If we cannot let go of the relatively minor attachment to clothes for a period of time, then it will be very difficult to let go of the deeper attachments that create suffering in our lives.

It is best to be prepared for a variety of weather conditions, with the emphasis on comfort and appropriateness, rather than fashion. In the meditation hall, please wear quiet fabrics (for example, cotton instead of nylon). Make sure you have enough clothes to stay warm at night, bring at least one set of clothes suitable for working outside and be prepared for rain if it comes.

### **Afternoon Allowables**

There are some food items that are allowable to eat in the afternoon if you find that your energy is getting too low: cheese, dark chocolate, candied ginger and licorice are some of the popular ones, in addition to juice, tea, honey and coffee. We suggest that you bring your own afternoon allowables (and maybe some to share with others). There is a communal supply of tea, coffee and cocoa, but guests are also welcome to bring their own. No food, drinks or afternoon allowables are permitted in dwellings; however, they may be stored in the communal kitchen area. The concept of 'no dinner' is always more intimidating than the reality, and it can actually feel much better and lighter to have little or nothing in one's belly in the evening than to have it too full of the 'allowables'.

## **Smoking and Fires**

Smoking or lighting fires of any kind, including candles, are prohibited due to the risk of fire. The only exceptions to this are the candles that are lit in the meditation hall.

## **Arranging Transportation**

Vimutti Monastery is located near the small town of Bombay. If you are driving, please see the directions below. If you plan to take a bus from Auckland or Hamilton, you can get off at the Bombay Service Centre, exit #471, on the Southern Motorway (Hwy 1). If you inform the monastery in advance of your arrival time, it is often possible that someone from the monastery can pick you up. Guests have also had good luck hitch-hiking.

If you are arriving at the airport, public transportation to Bombay is available but expensive. It is often possible that someone from the monastery can pick you up, however for this we request a \$40 fee to cover expenses.

## **Directions to Vimutti Buddhist Monastery**

- Take the Southern Motorway between Auckland and Hamilton
- Get off at Bombay exit # 471 and go left onto Mill Rd.
- Proceed through a roundabout until a 'T' of Razorback & Bombay Roads,
- Go left on Bombay Rd.
- Take the next sharp right curve into Paparata Rd.
- Stay on Paparata 7km until you pass Lynd Rd on your left.
- Then turn right onto Nibbana drive and continue down to the monastery.

## **A Guide to Monastic Etiquette**

This brief introduction to monastic etiquette is intended as a guide to laypeople staying at Vimutti Buddhist Monastery. People from non-Buddhist backgrounds may find the discipline and customs somewhat unfamiliar. It is hoped that the following information will help in giving a greater understanding and sensitivity to the various conventions of monastic life.

## **The Monastic Code**

The *Vinaya*, the monastic code of discipline, establishes a relationship with laypeople such that without their daily support the Sangha could not continue. Monks and nuns are prohibited from possessing money and from storing food. They are completely dependent on the laity for many simple things, such as the preparation and offering of food, pruning foliage and digging the earth.

### **Respectfulness**

In monasteries, emphasis is placed on establishing harmony by mindfulness and consideration for others. Guests are invited to share in these observances of beautiful behavior and sensitivity.

Before entering a shrine room or living space it is necessary to remove the shoes. Although visitors are not obliged to, there is the custom of bowing to the shrine or teacher. The triple bow, to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, is usually done at one's place when entering or leaving the meditation hall. At the end of a formal meditation period, respect is usually shown to the senior monk with the triple bow. When in the meditation hall try to move with as little noise as possible. One should sit upright with alertness and avoid lounging or sitting with one's back against the wall, especially during a Dhamma talk. Care should be taken not to point the feet at the shrine or at other people generally, as this can be considered impolite.

### **Offerings**

Monks and nuns are allowed to collect and consume their daily meal in the period between dawn and noon. Anything they intend to eat or drink, except water, must be formally offered into their hands or placed on or into something in direct contact with their body. When offering something to a monk or nun who is seated, or talking with them, it is polite not stand looming over them.

Monks and nuns at Vimutti Monastery are not allowed to accept personal offerings of money or to have personal funds held for them by someone else. All donations for the well-being of the Sangha go into one communal fund. When a monastic is in need of an item, he or she can then request the item from the Sangha.

### **Relationships**

In our tradition monks and nuns lead lives of total celibacy. This includes refraining from lewd speech or physical contact with lustful intent, both of

which are serious offenses against the *Vinaya* discipline. To avoid this and to prevent gossip or misunderstanding from arising, a monk has to be accompanied by another male whenever he is engaging in a long conversation with a woman. Similarly, a nun must be accompanied by another woman when speaking with a man.

Guests are asked to be sensitive to the proper mode of conduct for men and women within a monastic setting. Complete segregation of the sexes is mandatory and no man should enter a woman's lodgings, or vice versa, without permission from the senior monk.

### **Terms of Address**

The abbot is usually addressed as 'Ajahn' or 'Tan Ajahn' ('Tan' is a Thai word meaning 'venerable'. Ajahn is a Thai word derived from the Pāli word *Ācariya*, meaning 'teacher'). Any monk who has been ordained for at least ten years may be referred to as 'Ajahn'. Other monks can be addressed as 'Venerable' or 'Tan'. Any monk, senior or junior can be called 'Bhante', a more general term of respect. These designations may or may not be followed by the ordained name of the individual monk. Nuns, if they have been ordained for ten years or more, may also be addressed as 'Ajahn', or else 'Sister' or 'Ayyā'.

### **Añjali and Bowing**

*Añjali* is a gesture of respect made by holding the hands together in prayer-like fashion at the centre of one's chest. It is polite to hold one's hands in *añjali* when speaking with a monk or nun. After making an offering the head can be bowed slightly forward to come near the hands held in *añjali*.

Bowing is a gesture of lowering one's head and ego in order to show respect towards those things which represent our highest aspirations—such as the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. To bow correctly, kneel with the buttocks on the heels and with the hands in *añjali*. Bend the body forward and open the hands until the palms are resting on the floor about four inches apart. Then bring the forehead down to touch between the palms, with the elbows on the floor. Repeat two more times.

**We hope that your stay at Vimutti Buddhist Monastery will be peaceful and beneficial.**