



Āloka Vihāra
Forest Monastery

Visitor Guidelines

We offer the following information as a support for your stay with us at Aloka Vihara. The guidelines outlined can be especially helpful if you've never experienced a monastic environment, and just as supportive for folks who have spent time at other monasteries.

We aim to cocreate an environment conducive to awakening through Dhamma practice and service. This is made possible through the active cooperation and participation of all who live and visit here. We value harmonious living and are committed to offering an inclusive and safe space for all.

Please read the following items thoroughly and direct any questions/concerns to the Guest Coordinator (guestnun@gmail.com) before confirming your visit. We ask that all visitors agree with the Guest Guidelines before confirming you stay.

Living on Eight Precepts

All guests are asked to keep the Eight Precepts during their stay as a commitment to living together in a community that fosters trust, harmlessness and simplicity. We encourage you to enter into the spirit of monastic life and renunciation while you are at the vihara.

The Eight Precepts are:

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking the life of any living creature.
2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. I undertake the precept to refrain from any kind of sexual activity.
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from false and harmful speech.
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from consuming intoxicating drink and drugs, which lead to carelessness.
6. I undertake the precept to refrain from eating at inappropriate times.**
7. I undertake the precept to refrain from entertainment, beautification and adornment.
8. I undertake the precept to refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place (not indulging in sleep).

On your first day of arrival, you will have the opportunity to chant/recite the precepts in Pali and English (call and response) with one of the monastics. If you've never chanted the precepts you

can listen and learn more [here](#). You can see and hear excerpts from the Aloka Vihara Chanting Book [here](#).

**The last meal is served at midday. Tea time is generally from 5pm -6 pm when you can consume “allowables”. We ask guests to bring their own. 8 precept allowables include:

- Cheese and/or ghee
- Candied or dried giner
- Cacao powder/nibs
- Dark chocolate (no milk/added fruit/nuts)
- Seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, hemp, chia)
- Juice

Aloka Vihara provides hot drinks and soy milk for the community. Please write to the Guest Coordinator if you have medical concerns around maintaining the 6th precept.

Length of Stay and Arrival Dates/Times

The minimum duration for staying at the vihara is one week. The maximum duration for a new guest is three weeks, with a community review after the first week to ensure a mutually beneficial visit.

We ask that guests arrive and depart between Wednesdays and Sundays. **Please plan your arrival/departure times between 8 am to 4 pm.** For more information on transportation visit our website [here](#).

Accommodations

There is space for up to three female guests in a dormitory on the second floor of the building next to the main house (accessible by a flight of stairs). A sense of privacy is created with the use of room dividers. The dorm currently does not have a bathroom. Guests can either walk over to the main house to use the guest bathroom or a portable ‘potty’ can be provided upon request.

Please let us know **if you snore loudly**, as our dorm is a shared sleeping place and we may need to make other arrangements.

The trailer onsite is a private space available for men, transgender, or nonbinary folks.

Weekly Schedule

All guests are expected to join in the daily activities as outlined in the Weekly Schedule. The following is the typical daily schedule (From Wednesday through Monday):

- 5:00am – Wake Up
- 5:30am – Morning Puja (*meditation & chanting*)
- 7:00am - Breakfast
- 8:00am - 11:00am (*or 11:45am during DST*) Personal Practice

- 11:00am (or 11:45am during DST)- Main Meal
- 1:30pm - Stove Circle (*Community Meetings on Wednesday, Friday, Sunday*)
- 2:00pm - 4:30pm - Work Service
- 5:00pm - 6:00pm Tea Time
- 6:30-7:30 Evening Puja (*meditation & chanting*)

The schedule provides a strong support for life at the monastery. Generally there are no bells with the exception of meal service. We ask that guests arrive at activities in a timely manner. This contributes significantly to a harmonious practice environment. It can be helpful to bring a watch, and we have alarm clocks for use as well. We are in Noble Silence from 6:30pm evening puja up until lunch clean up the next day. Lastly, Tuesdays are a day of complete Noble Silence with an open schedule.

What to Bring/Dress Code

We suggest that all guests bring the following: a sunhat, sunscreen, sunglasses, flashlight and/or headlamp, work clothes and walking shoes. Footwear that can be easily taken on and off is very useful, as shoes are not worn indoors. You're welcome to bring "house slippers" for inside use. We have plenty of benches, zafus, and zabutons available for sitting. Warm things and rain gear are needed during the winter months and lighter clothing during the summer. A shawl or blanket can be supportive during formal meditation periods.

If you are driving yourself to the monastery, please bring one of each of the following: fitted sheet, top sheet, pillowcase and bath towel for your personal use. We have bedding available for folks coming out of town.

Please dress modestly and pack your clothing accordingly. We ask that you refrain from wearing tank tops and any skirts/shorts that fall above the knee.

Internet/Phone/Cell Phone Access

There is no WiFi access for guests at the vihara. If you need to go online, there is a Guest Computer available for up to two hours per week Wednesdays - Sunday. This limitation is to support your time here, being an opportunity for inner contemplation and slowing down. If you need to print a boarding pass or other tickets, the Guest Coordinator can assist you.

We also recommend keeping phone calls to a minimum to support quiet introspection. Currently, there is limited coverage for some cell phone providers only. If you need to make a phone call during your visit, you may use the vihara landline.

Expectations for Work Offering

At the Stove Circle Community Meeting, the Work Monastic will explain the service offerings for the day. As a guest, you may be asked to cook on some of the days, or support projects needing attention around the vihara. You will have the opportunity to discuss with the Work Monastic any physical limitations you may have so that you are offering service that is aligned with your abilities.

If you are asked to cook, the Kitchen Volunteer will guide you in the preparation of the meals on the days you are assigned to cook. All lay and monastic residents as well as guests help with Washing Up and other light chores during your visit.

Guests staying for more than one week will be offered one day per week that is free of responsibilities for a quiet practice day.

The practice of giving is the beginning of the Path

At Aloka Vihara we value and appreciate your presence and practice. We are continuing the rich and vital interdependence between lay people and monastics as set forth by the Buddha. Everything here, from tea to electricity to the house and land itself, is the result of the generosity of many people. To the extent that you are able, we would be grateful for your contribution, which will benefit you, the monastics and those who come after you.

No one will be turned away for lack of a donation.

Last Words

One who transforms old and heedless ways

Into fresh and wholesome acts

Brings light into the world

Like the moon freed from the clouds.

Dhammapada 173

Jan 2022