

Introduction to the retreat



SunArt Center offers a unique experience for both long term meditation practitioners and those who has never done meditation before. In meditation we observe our mind which is a very deep, complex and elaborate system. This process of observing brings plenty of joyful and sometimes difficult moments. Retreat is a challenge for your consciousness. If you maintain your meditation habit after the retreat you will experience something beyond happiness. We hope you will find your life more meaningful and that you will open the

door to a new world, free from suffering and attachment, where everything is in calm harmony and where human is in unity with the universe.

“Trainings” (meditation basics)



Calm mind and understanding the universal rules of nature are both reached in meditation and for that we need a calm and solid ground. Mind in stillness and mindful action help to preserve such ground. To move deeper in meditation practice we need our lives to become full of compassion and giving. We need to follow the principle of “First - do no harm” and stop all dangerous actions towards ourselves and others. In Buddhism this type of life is achieved by taking the 5 five "trainings" below:

1. Abstain from killing living creatures
2. Don't take what is not given
3. Avoid sexual misconduct
4. Refrain from false speech
5. Refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.

It may seem that such rules are easy to follow during the retreat. But during your stay at SunArt Center you will find plenty of opportunities to break them if you are not mindful: “borrow” someone else’s soap, flip flops or yoga mat, etc. by accident; start flirting and love games (here we ask you to refrain from all signs sexuality). Also be mindful not to kill the mosquito biting you. Try to keep awareness of each action or thought you’re making to avoid any harm towards living creatures in this way or another.

Retreat Daily Schedule



- 06:00 Wake up
- 06:30 Sunrise meditation
- 07:00 Yoga Tibetan monks style
- 09:00 Breakfast
- 09:30 Free time
- 11:00 Sitting meditation
- 11:30 Lectures or other practices
- 13:30 Sitting meditation
- 14:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Free time
- 16:00 Loving Kindness meditation
- 17:00 Tea, coffee, fruits
- 18:00 Sunset
- 19:00 Dinner
- 19:30 Meditation by the fire
- 20:00 Walking meditation
- 20:30 Sitting meditation
- 21:00 Bed time
- 21:30 Lights off

Please follow the daily schedule. It is important to participate in all scheduled practices and events, your presence is a “must”. We will stick with this schedule during your retreat so you always know when and where to go. All schedule updates will be put on information board. By participating in all events and practices you create a productive atmosphere of teamwork and mutual help.

Please study the schedule before you come to the retreat to fully understand what you are going to do here.

For some of you the schedule might be challenging, but it's not that hard as it seems. While developing the schedule we used the best world practices from other meditation retreats and advise from many experienced retreat participants. We found our current schedule the most effective for successful meditation practice. Sometimes you will feel a temptation to skip some practices, events or classes. Please don't do that! Even a small seed of carelessness can grow very quickly. Although if you don't feel well, then you definitely need a rest. But if you're just mentally tired (anxiety, boredom) - don't give up. Try to relax and observe your mind - this will help to overcome all the obstacles.

Living rules and conditions



Meditation hall

Meditation retreat

For most of us meditation retreat is an extraordinary event compared to practicing meditation on our own. On a retreat we need to find a way to live together as a group in simple living conditions. Here we are united by a collective experience of meditation with all its joy and hardships, insights and pitfalls. During the retreat we are connected by the common goal of becoming better human beings. Here we put aside the urge for personal benefit and egoistic desires which are driving modern human world. And to preserve this harmony we need to follow certain rules. Here are the top ones: stay silent, give way to others, follow the schedule, follow the “5 Trainings” and stay within the retreat center area.

Silence

Egoistic speech takes lots of energy. People discuss unimportant things, gossip, offence each other verbally and shout on each other. This causes not only trouble in the outer world but also anxiety in our minds. Please abstain from speech and handwritten messages to each other during the retreat to calm down your mind and maintain quiet and peaceful environment for everyone.

For some of you this will be challenge but this a very beneficial experience for each of you. Some participants travel far distances to visit SunArt Center so please show respect and compassion by staying silent and mindful.

The practice of silent action leads to great results. Also it's important not to judge or criticise others. Self-discipline and compassion are part of the retreat educational program.

“Silence” also means refraining from books. You will get plenty of information during the retreat and reading will only distract and might even confuse you. Please keep your books closed, you will have lots of time for that after the retreat. Also please refrain from writing

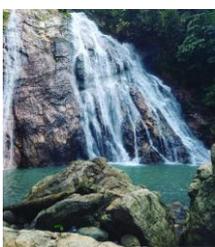
(taking notes during lectures is OK). Writing letters, poems and stories, journaling - all this distracts your mind from the main purpose of meditation.

Schedule



As said, during the retreat we follow a simple schedule. You don't even have to watch the clock - you will be guided by the big bell ring. Please participate in all practices, classes and lectures. You will have plenty of time for showering, laundry, relaxing and reflecting on your meditation progress during specifically allocated time slots.

Waterfall



During the retreat we encourage you to visit our waterfall daily for bathing and meditation practice. Fresh rainwater from hilltops brings a strong energy boost and waterfall location is full with prana. Recharge and cleanse yourself with the energy of waterfall everyday.

Self-practice

One of the key self-practices is daily meditation "mindfulness with breathing" or Anapanasati. That means sitting for 10 - 30 mins with eyes closed and legs crossed, watching our breath and observing the air coming in and out. This is a key practice to gain energy, calm down the mind and achieve inner peace. We encourage you to practice "mindfulness with breathing" 3 times per day in between scheduled group practices.

Power of the sun

Sync up with natural solar cycle and watch the sunrise and sunset from our stunning viewpoint to source the energy of light and nature.

Teachers and master classes

During the retreat you will be visited by practitioners from all over the world, some of them will be staying at SunArt center with you. Classes are held in English and in Russian. Visit all scheduled practices and master classes, you will be informed about schedule updates.

Volunteer work (karma yoga)

On the check-in day you will be offered to take part some in some of the housekeeping duties. This simple work helps to cultivate mutual responsibility and respect. It takes no more than 20

minutes a day and we encourage you to be mindful during your work. Everything that we do in life is a practice of Dhamma, be present and alert, be aware of each movement and thought.

Stay within yourself

There is nowhere to go here apart from the depths of your own consciousness. This can be a challenging journey. You can fall into boredom or anxiety and if that happens - stay alert and mindful. You can gain a lot of knowledge about yourself in those states. Don't let your mind go somewhere beyond the here and now, if you start distracting yourself it will become an obstacle to your meditation practice. Make sure you have all necessary belongings prepared before the retreat.

Clothes

Please wear comfortable loose clothing, it can be thin and light but make sure it's not transparent. Also please keep your clothes clean and tidy. Your clothes must cover your knees, shoulders and belly during meditation (otherwise it's disrespectful towards other retreat participants).

There's no need to wear jewelry, be more simple and natural. Please keep your underwear and bras on.

Smoking

Nicotine is a toxic substance poisoning our bodies. It prevents you for deep meditation and natural relaxation. Please refrain from smoking during the retreat.

Give way to others

Modern world makes us act assertive, pushy and aggressive. But during the retreat we can relax and feel the freedom. At the retreat we have nothing to worry about and nowhere to rush: here we can practice calmly with silent mind. Giving way to others is not just a physical act and a gesture of good manners. This is a sign of friendliness, kindness and support that we carry in our hearts. Living conditions and lifestyle in SunArt Center are a perfect environment to start giving way to others silently.

Smiles



Remember that gentle, compassionate and kind smile of Buddha. Positive attitude and good mood can help you in many difficult situations. Smile is essential when you stay silent for days in a row, without it the meditation hall becomes a dark place. Smile - this is a great tool for non-verbal communication.



Meditation viewpoint

Health



There are no specific health requirements to take part in the retreat although sickness can become an obstacle during such mentally and emotionally challenging event. If you are ill it is better to recover first and then visit the next retreat. For Westerners, especially older aged, it will take some time to adjust their bodies for meditation pose and finding the right balance. If you have pain in your back, neck, knees or hips you might experience some difficulties. Please contact your instructors and teachers for support.

Food



We serve vegetarian food cooked with love and kindness for breakfast, lunch and dinner with tea, coffee and fruits in-between. We have everything for healthy eating. Everyone is eating together in silence.

Accommodation

We have capsule unit rooms built separately for men and women. Fresh and clean bed linings and a towel is provided to each retreat participant. Please tidy your sleeping space before check-out.



Safety

Mind your step and check your living space for insects and snakes - people stumble upon such creatures very rarely but watch out, stay alert and mindful. Make sure you have a source of light in the dark and contact SunArt team if you need assistance.

Free time

To know but not to do = not to know. Keep on practicing during your free time. Spiritual growth is first of all a personal inner work and independent implementation of gained knowledge.

Valuable belongings

For safety and convenience you can keep your valuable belongings in a safe box. This way you won't distract and worry about them during meditation. We will keep your passports, mobile phones, photo cameras, watches and jewelry safe until your departure day. Just take everything you need for daily life and a small amount of money in case you will be making small purchases during the retreat.

Attention: usage of photo cameras, mobile phones, audio players and e-books is prohibited.