

WHAT TO BRING AND EXPECT AT A MADISON VIPASSANA, INC. RETREAT:

Directions to **Pine Lake Retreat Center**, Westfield WI, Driving time from downtown Madison is approx. 1 hr, 20 min.

From Madison:

Take I-90/94 to I-39 (also called US- 51) toward Portage/Wausau (exit 108- B),

From I-39, take the Westfield exit (Exit 113)

Turn left toward town (County Hwy E west /County Hwy J west, also called East 2nd St.)

Take the first right, on Pioneer Park Road. Go past McDonalds and Pioneer Inn, and Pioneer Park.

At the intersection after the park, turn right (McCarthy Carpet Store will be on the corner). This is

County Hwy CH/ County Hwy M (also called North Main St.).

Go past the High School and look for **County Hwy M** on your left. **County Hwy M is only about ¼ mile past the high school** and it's easy to miss, so be alert.

Turn left onto County Hwy M and go 6.1 miles. Pine Lake Camp is on the left. Look for the stone marker.

If you get lost or have difficulty call the Pine Lake Camp office at (800) 648-9630.

What to Bring:

Arrival: Please try to arrive to register and settle in between 5:00 and 6:00 P.M. Please have your evening meal before arriving at the retreat.

Each participant will have a double or triple room unless they have requested and paid for a single. Single rooms are limited.

Pine Lake Center is a smoke free facility. If you smoke, please use the areas designated by the Center.

Orientation: There will be a brief orientation at 6:15 PM for those who are attending their first vipassana retreat. People attending a retreat for the first time sometimes find themselves uncomfortable with the silent format and the lack of interchange with the other retreatants. If this is your first retreat you may find the orientation beneficial, giving you a chance to hear about and ask questions about what to expect during the retreat.

Clothing: Bring loose fitting, comfortable clothing for sitting, warm outer wear for outdoor walking, and you may want a blanket/shawl to put over your shoulders or on your lap while meditating.

Essentials: You should bring an alarm clock. **a flashlight**, shampoo, toothbrush, etc. Towels and bed linen will be provided. Please avoid the use of perfumes or any strong smelling soaps or cosmetics as some people may be reactive or allergic to the odor.

Please bring your own meditation cushion or bench, and zabuton or blanket,. Chairs will be available for those not wishing to sit on the floor.

Questions: Prior to the retreat call Julie Meyer, 608-231-1558, during the retreat talk to the retreat manager.

Retreat schedule: The schedule of retreat activities will be posted and will involve meditation instruction, 45 minute periods of sitting meditation alternating with periods of walking meditation, talks by the teacher and interviews with the teacher. We ask that you follow the schedule as closely as possible to get the maximum benefit from the retreat. There is usually a period of rest after each meal. You are free to use this time to shower, sleep, exercise, or continue sitting practice.

Noble Silence: In keeping with Buddhist traditions, the retreat will be held in silence, except where it is absolutely necessary to speak. It is recommended that retreatants also avoid intentional eye contact and other forms of non-verbal communication. This will help minimize distractions so that each person can conserve energy for the work of meditation. As a part of noble silence we also suggest that you refrain from reading, writing and the use of any other media during the retreat.

Please plan not to make or receive phone calls during the retreat except for emergencies. Many cell phones do not receive a signal at Pine Lake so it is recommended you bring a phone card that you can use in an emergency with the land line at the retreat center. There will be a bulletin board for necessary communication with the teacher or the retreat managers. Also please remember to turn off alarms on electronic watches.

Sitting: Please remove your shoes before entering the meditation hall. Please be on time for group sittings and stay for the entire period. Please do not bring food or drink into the meditation hall.

Interviews: Interviews with the teacher will be scheduled during the retreat. These will be group interviews. There may be a limited amount of time allotted for individual interviews, depending on the number of people who attend the retreat. These interviews will provide participants with an opportunity to ask questions, obtain guidance, support, and clarification regarding the meditation process. Times will be posted on the bulletin board.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and light evening meal will be served on each full day. Breakfast and lunch will be served on the final day. Silence will be ended before lunch on the final day so that people will have an opportunity to meet and share experiences during the lunch period.

Five Training Precepts: We ask that you observe the tradition and the spirit of the Five Training Precepts during the time of the retreat. It is a way of maintaining a basic purity of body, speech and mind.

1. Non-harming: Honoring and respecting all sentient beings (including insects), and not acting out of hatred or aversion in such a way as to cause harm to any living being.
2. Non-stealing: not taking that which is not freely given, respecting the property of all beings.
3. Refraining from false or harmful speech: Speaking only what is true and useful, speaking wisely, responsibly, and appropriately. In the context of this retreat this involves keeping noble silence.
4. Refraining from sexual misconduct: In the context of this retreat, this means refraining from all sexual activity.
5. Refraining from the use of intoxicants: Abstaining from the use of alcohol or other non-prescription drugs.

Dana: In the Pali language, which was spoken at the time of the Buddha, *dana* means “generosity” or “giving”. It is intrinsic to the 2550 year Buddhist tradition that the teachings are priceless and are thus offered freely by the teacher as a form of *dana*. The early teachers, who were monks or nuns received no payment for their instruction. In turn, the lay community saw to it that the basic needs of food clothing and shelter were provided for the teachers.

Beyond this practical dimension, *dana* also plays a crucial role in spiritual life. It is the first of the ten *paramis* or qualities of character to be perfected in many lifetimes. When the Buddha would give a discourse to lay people he would almost always begin with the importance of generosity.

The act of giving itself is of immeasurable benefit to the giver, for it opens the heart, diminishing one’s self-absorption, and places value on the well-being of others. The simple gesture of offering a flower, a kind thought or a simple meal is in itself a sincere form of practice. The size or value of the gift is not the point.

Continuing this tradition today, the teachers do not ask for any payment for leading a retreat. They are supported by voluntary contributions from the retreat participants. The fee you paid for this retreat covers the cost of the room, meals, use of the facility, organizational costs, and the teacher’s transportation, room and meals. At the end of the retreat there will be an opportunity to offer *dana* to the teacher for the teaching and guidance he or she has provided. There is no suggested amount; each person gives what is right for him or her. Please remember that as we depend on the teachers, they depend on us.

May you have a beneficial retreat.