

Meditation in Southeast Asia

Compiled by Dieter Baltruschat
Translated by Katharina Titkemeyer
Munich, BGM August 2006

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa

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Translated from German into English by Katharina Titkemeyer

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Preface and thanks

First of all I would like to thank all those people who exert great effort and devotion to support the Asian meditation centres and monasteries by giving donations and assistance and/or passing on the Dhamma.

Three personal reports from people who had meditated in Asia, given to the members of the Munich Buddhist Society during their regular Monday meetings, formed the basis of this retreat guide. They were written down in order to be available to newly interested people at any time. The result was a rapidly increasing loose-leaf collection of interesting information concerning meditation in Asia (mainly in form of leaflets of various monasteries) in the offices of the German Buddhist Union. Many thanks to all who contributed to this collection! However, keeping it up to date proved to be difficult and passing on the information required a lot of time and money (making copies, dispatch them, etc.)

That was why Werner Liegl suggested to grant interested people free and easy access to the collected information by making it available through the internet. Apart from that he generously offered to bring his knowledge and his engagement to bear on the project and to carry it out. From that time data and personal reports were collected on a larger scale and were brought into a systematic form based on Bill Weir's (see literary reference). The first printout contained about ten centres. Hilde Scheller assisted in proofreading and phrasing. Désirée Schoen kindly took on the editor's job and supplied the printouts. Also many thanks for their personal reports and information to Ven. Pra Claus, Hildegard Huber, Sr. Ariya Nani, Samaneri Uppalavanna Theri, Samanera Analayo, Maggy, Malinee Polte, Ven. Mettiko Bhikkhu, Gerd Neller, Ven. Than Martin, Jörg Dittmar, Steve Weissman, Helge Latzina, Chanda von Keyserlingk, Hella Lohmann, Martin H. Petrich, Than Gavesako, Metaji, Erik Hausstädtler the people working at buddhanet.net and a modest Samanera, who does not want to be mentioned by name (although he made a considerable contribution to the Sri Lanka chapter). I am particularly grateful to Katharina Titkemeyer, who translated the first four chapters (Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka and Nepal) into English, und Désirée Schoen, who overtook the editor's job for the English version, too, as well as the translation of some paragraphs.

Different people prefer and dislike different kinds of food – the same it true for meditation methods, Dhamma talks, places and retreat conditions. Almost every place described in this retreat guide was particularly recommended by someone. However, this does not mean that somebody else would recommend it, too. Thus the individual descriptions within the chapters are not ordered according to their quality, but mainly chronologically; other aspects were geographical proximity and belonging to the same tradition.

May all people find a suitable place and reach freedom.

Dieter Baltruschat

1. Thailand

Thailand is a pleasant and uncomplicated country to travel in. Flight fares (from US\$ 600 up, usually around US\$ 850) are fairly reasonable. Health care and hygienic standards are high in comparison to other Asian countries, the cuisine is considered one of Asia's finest, and Thais are friendly people. Obtaining visas is uncomplicated. It has some outstanding meditation teachers. Some monasteries have excellent conditions for practice.

Thailand also offers a broad spectrum of retreats. Whether you are a beginner wishing to combine a beach holiday with a meditation course, a meditator who wishes to ordain in a forest monastery, or simply want to practise intensely, you will find a suitable place.

English, however, is not commonly spoken and therefore communication can be difficult, especially in the lesser known monasteries.

A four week visitors' visa can be obtained at no cost at the airport. Tourist visas (valid two months) or non-immigrant visas (valid three months) must be obtained before entry at Thai embassies or consulates.

We recommend the travel guide *Thailand – A Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet).

Reasonable flights: With Thai Air Asia; website: www.airasia.com;

11 routes starting from Bangkok (e.g. to Macau/China, Kuala Lumpur and Penang in Malaysia and to Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Phuket in Thailand).

Or with Nokair (cheap subsidiary of Thai Airways); website: www.nokai.co.th;

routes: from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, Phitsanulok, Udon Thani, Phuket and Hat Yai in Thailand (prices for example: Bangkok–Phitsanulok 995 THB (= approx. 19 Euro); Chiang Mai–Bangkok 928 THB (= approx. 18 Euro)).

Located in its own two story building at the back of a park at Sukhumvit Road and Soi 24. This is the best place in Bangkok to find out about the latest meditation retreats, teachings and information on Buddhist centres in Thailand:

World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB)

616 Benjasiri Park Soi - Medhinivet off Soi Sukhumvit,

24 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 10110 Thailand

Tel: (662) 661 1284-89

Fax: (662) 661 0555

Email: wfb_hq@asianet.co.th

Internet: www.wfb-hq.org

On the First Sunday of every month the WFB offers a program on Buddhism conducted in English, free of charge for the public at its headquarters off Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok.

1.1 Wat Suan Mokkh

by Dieter Baltruschat, last updated March 2003

Address: no registration (but arrive on time)
Wat Suan Mokkh, Chaiya, Surat Thani 84110, Thailand
Internet: www.suanmokkh.org

Description: The „Garden of Liberation“ is located about 640 km south of Bangkok, 50 km from Surat Thani (ferry to Ko Samui and Ko Phangan). Wooded area with hill and pond. The monks' living quarters are strewn along paths through the wood. Larger common buildings include the spiritual theatre (art exhibitions), the Dhamma-ships (congregation halls) and the guest kitchen. Unfortunately, traffic noise from highway 41 can be heard.

Retreats are conducted in the fairly quiet retreat center about 1.5 km away. It accommodates up to 180 people. Palm trees and two hot springs can be found on the spacious grounds where you can stretch your legs during breaks.

How to get there: From Bangkok best take the train to Chaiya (not all trains stop!). The trip is about 12 hours. We recommend the 2nd class sleeper (take reservations!). From Chaiya take a Songthaew (shared taxi, about 10 Baht) for the 7 km to Wat Suan Mokkh. From Surat Thani or Phun Phin (train station) about 1 hour by bus (departs hourly, about 20 Baht). Absolutely arrive before dusk.

Tradition: Theravada, methods according to Ajahn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu.
Focus: Introduction to meditation (sitting, standing, walking) and basics of Buddhism.

Meditation technique: Anapanasati (Mindfulness with Breathing) is practised during the entire retreat. Ajahn Buddhadasa does not strictly differentiate between Samatha and Vipassana meditation. Rather, he advocates the simultaneous development of mental tranquility and insight (the bird's two wings). Anapanasati is taught in four steps: observation of the body (kaya), of feeling (vedana), the mind (citta) and the insight into the highest dhamma. These four observations are subdivided into four steps.

Teacher and guidance: Ajahn Poh is in his early seventies. He is highly experienced in meditation and in teaching Buddha-Dhamma. He heads the Wat following the tradition of famous Dhamma teacher Ajahn Buddhadasa. Teachings will be by Ajahn Poh, monks, or Western meditators. Teachers are not called teachers

but Dhamma-friends. Personal questions can be addressed individually with Ajahn Poh or others.

Language(s): Teachings are in English. Thai-English needs getting used to and for a newcomer is often difficult to comprehend.

Course duration and dates: A 10-day retreat starts every first day of the month (ends the morning of the 11th). Since preregistration is not available you must arrive on time, that is, one day early at the latest (better two). Dormitory accommodation available. Registration on the last day of the month starting about 9 a.m.

Accommodation: Between and before retreats in the Wat Suan Mokkh dormitory. For men also in kutis in the forest. During retreats individual cells (womens' and mens' house) in the retreat center. Simple but clean toilets and laundry facilities. No showers, but mandis (water basin and plastic bowl). In the evening you have the possibility to take a bath in a hot spring. Men will need shorts (no bathing trunks), women a sarong (no bathing suits). You sleep on straw mats placed directly on concrete or wooden floors. If you consider this too hard, bring an insulation pad (Ridge-Rest or Therm-A-Rest are a little more costly, but quite comfortable). Mosquito nets and blankets can be borrowed. A light sleeping bag may be a good idea especially during the cooler season. Meditation pillows and pads are available. In „high season“ (December to March) pillows may become scarce.

Shopping: Before the retreat you should buy a **torch**, shorts (for men), a sarong (cloth for wearing, covering, fending off mosquitoes), **flip-flops**, **water bottle**, insect repellent and hygiene articles. You can buy these things in Chaiya. During the rainy season an umbrella is useful. Some hygiene articles and other daily necessities can be bought during the retreat.

Food: For breakfast there is rice soup and a hot drink. For lunch there is rice, two vegetarian dishes and sometimes fruit (self-service). Evenings: a hot drink. Potable water (rain water) is filtered and is safe for consumption. If you want to be sure, bring disinfectant.

Cost: A 10-day retreat is about 1200 Baht, outside retreat times dormitory accommodation and evening tea are for free. Breakfast and lunch vouchers are 30 Baht.

Medical care: Very good by Asian standards. The nearest hospital and pharmacies

are in Chaiya. The area is not considered malaria area, but in other parts of Thailand malaria is common. Hygienic conditions in the Wat are good.

Rules: Participants commit themselves to remain for the entire retreat, to observe the schedule, to keep noble silence, not to read (except meditation instructions) and write, to suspend sexual activities and to observe the eight silas (eight moral precepts). Clothing should be comfortable, functional, and decent (no shorts or tank tops). Each participant is expected to take on a task serving the community (e.g. sweeping, filling up water) and to endeavor to lead a spiritual life.

Climate and best time to go: March, April (from april onwards very hot). Very crowded during main season from December to February and July/August. The rainy season in Southern Thailand is November/December.

Notes: A warm jacket can be useful during morning meditation. People with back problems should bring a good sleep pad. Books for the library are welcome. Since communication is in English, you might want to read an English book on Buddhism before the retreat in order to familiarize yourself with the relevant vocabulary (e.g. "Mindfulness With Breathing" or "Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree" by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Wisdom Publishers, Boston). You can find more information and a short meditation instruction at www.suanmokkh.org. Very suitable for beginners, good conditions.

Daily schedule: 4:00 a.m.: morning bell	2:30 p.m.: medit. instruction
4:30 a.m.: morning reading	3:30 p.m.: walking meditation
4:45 a.m.: sitting meditation	4:00 p.m.: sitting meditation
5:15 a.m.: exercise (f.i. Yoga)	4:30 p.m.: walking meditation
7:00 a.m.: sitting meditation	5:00 p.m.: chanting
8:00 a.m.: breakfast	6:00 p.m.: tea
10:00 a.m.: Dhamma talk	7:30 p.m.: Dhamma talk
10:45 a.m.: walking meditation	8:00 p.m.: walking meditation
11:15 a.m.: sitting meditation	8:30 p.m.: sitting meditation
12:00 a.m.: walking meditation	9:00 p.m.: end
12:30 a.m.: lunch	

Special suggestion by Phra Claus: Laem Sor (on Ko Samui):

On the southernmost tip of Ko Samui (1.2 km off H 4170) there is a chedi (chedi Laem Sor), called Pagoda, which is part of a Wat with friendly monks and nuns.

This idyllic Wat welcomes Westerners aspiring to meditation. The Dutch monk Gunankaro (?), who is usually present, takes care of them.

The head of this Wat is Ajahn Poh of Suan Mokkh. If you want to meditate there for an extended period of time, it is best to inquire with Ajahn Poh after a 10-day course in Suan Mokkh. Ajahn Poh can then give you a letter of introduction for the abbot there.

1.2 Wat Pah Nanachat (International Forest Monastery)

source: Dieter Baltruschat and infoletter from the Wat, last updated Dez. 2005

Address: early registration strongly recommended!
Wat Pah Nanachat
The Guest Monk
Ban Bung Wai, Amphur Warin Chamrap
Ubonratchathani 34310, Thailand
Tel: 045-4000-15 and Fax: 045-400-16.
Internet: <http://www.fsnewsletter.amaravati.org>

Location: Wat Pah Nanachat is located on the road between the towns Warin and Si Saket near the village Ban Bung Wai in a little forest. The Wat is about 15 km from the northeastern Thai city of Ubon Ratchathani. To Bangkok about 600 km, to the Laos border about 80 km.

Language(s): English.

How to get there from Bangkok: Mornings, there are two trains to Ubon (departure 5:45 a.m. and 6:40 a.m., arrival 2:05 and 5:45 p.m.). We recommend the night train with sleeper (departure 9 p.m., arrival 7:20 a.m., about 500 Baht). Ubon train station is located in the nearby town of Warin (the inexpensive Rivermoon guest-house is at walking distance). Then take a Songtaew to Bung Wai (about 20 Baht).

From the northern bus terminal about 15 busses per day leave for Ubon (starting 4:30 a.m. until 9 p.m.). In the town center you'll find an excellent tourist information (town map, interesting brochures, Tel. 045-243770).

If you arrive by bus at Ubon you can take the pink city bus to Warin (5 Baht). Then take a Songtaew to Bung Wai (about 20 Baht).

Twice daily (morning and evening) there is a flight from Bangkok to Ubon (about 1400 Baht). A taxi to the Wat is about 200 Baht.

Tradition: The Wat was founded in 1975 by Ajahn Chah, a Theravada meditation teacher highly regarded in Thailand. Ajahn Sumedo was its first abbot.

Meditation technique: Life and practice according to strict Thai forest monastic guidelines. No particular technique is practised; rather, meditators are invited to draw from the abundance of the Theravada tradition's recommended reflections and practices (e.g. Anapanasati, 32 body parts ...).

Costs: Guests are welcome to give a donation.

Extended stay and possibilities to ordain: Since the monastery is not a retreat center for laypersons, it does not offer meditation courses. Hence there are no particular dates to adhere to. However, six male and six female guests can be accommodated for some time to participate in monastic everyday life. Since demand is high, early registration is highly recommended. Usually, guests have the option to practise several hours a day individually.

Wat Pah Nanachat offers to the interested the opportunity to live the authentic life of a Thai forest tradition monk. Laymen who want to be accepted into the sangha train about 18 months as novices before being fully ordained as monks. There is no community of nuns/nunnery at Wat Pah Nanachat. However, women can apply to this monastery in England:

Amaravati Buddhist Monastery, Gt. Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 3 BZ, United Kingdom.

Accommodation: For the first three days guests are accommodated in dorms. If you want to stay longer, you have to consult the abbot. Men are then asked to shave their heads, wear white clothing and move to a kuti (hut) in the forest. A light sleeping bag is useful, especially during the cooler season. Mosquito nets, sheets, blankets and pillows are provided by the monastery.

What to bring: Before the retreat, be sure to get an **alarm clock**, a **quality torch** (spare bulb and batteries), flip-flops, water bottle, **insect repellent**, toilet articles, candles and matches. All these things are available in Warin or Ubon. A warm jacket

may be useful during morning meditation.

Food: The only meal of the day is breakfast at 8 a.m. Laypersons receive a share of the food offered to the monks. Bring disinfectant to increase potable water safety.

Medical care: Good by Asian standards. The nearest hospital and pharmacies are in the province capital Ubon. The area is not considered malaria area but in other parts of Thailand malaria is common.

Rules: All guests commit themselves to adhere to the eight silas (moral precepts). Clothing should be white, comfortable, and decent (no shorts or tank tops). Female guests traditionally wear a white blouse and a black skirt.

Daily schedule:

Dawn: monks and novices go out for alms, guests sweep paths or help in the kitchen.

8:00 a.m.: meal

9:00 a.m.: tidying up

9:30 a.m.: individual practice

3:30 p.m.: communal work

4:30 p.m.: afternoon drink (sometimes sangha meeting)

6:30 p.m.: individual practice

Climate and best time to go: November to February.

Notes: Particularly interesting for men who want to live for some time according to the rules of Thai forest monasteries and who consider ordaining, and for people who are interested in this tradition.

Day guests best arrive before 8 a.m. They are very welcome to participate in the offered meal. After that, there is an opportunity to speak with the abbot.

An interesting visit can be made to the memorial (stupa and museum) to Ajahn Chah at Wat Nong Pa Pong.

Texts by Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho at:

www.buddhamind.info/leftside/index.htm and

www.amaravati.fslife.co.uk/english/tch.html

Affiliated monasteries:

Britain:

Amaravati Buddhist Monastery

Great Gaddesden, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 3BZ

Office Tel: (01442) 842455, Retreat Info - Tel: 843239

Guest Info - Tel: 843411, Fax: (01442) 843721 www.amaravati.org

Aruna Ratanagiri Monastery, Harnham, Belsay, Northumberland, NE20 OHF

Tel: 01661 881 612, Fax: 01661 881 019

email: communiti@ratanagiri.org.uk Web site: www.ratanagiri.org.uk

Cittaviveka Chithurst Buddhist Monastery

Chithurst, Petersfield, Hampshire, GU31 5EU

Tel: (01730) 814 986 Fax: (01730) 817 334

Devon Vihara, Hartridge Buddhist Monastery

Upottery, Honiton, Devon EX14 9QE

Tel: (01404) 89-1251, Fax: (01404) 89-0023

Switzerland

Dhammapala Buddhistisches Kloster

Am Waldrand, CH 3718 Kandersteg

Tel: 033 675 2100 , Fax: 033 675 2241, Internet: www.dhammapala.ch

Italy

Santacittarama Monastero Buddhista, loc. Brulla, 22, 02030 Frasso Sabino (RI) Italy

Tel: (+39) 0765 872 186 (7:30-10:30, every days except *Monday*), Fax: (+39) 06 233 238 629

email: www.santacittarama.org website: sangha@santacittarama.org

Australia

Bodhinyana Monastery

Lot 1, Kingsbury Drive, Serpentine. WA 6125

Tel: (61-8) 9525 2420 Fax: (61-8) 9525 3420

Dhammaloka Buddhist Centre(Perth)

18-20 Nanson Way, Nollamara. WA 6061

Tel: (61-8) 9345 1711 Fax: (61-8) 9344 4220 Website: www.bswa.org.au

Western Australia Bodhivana Monastery

780 Woods Point Road, East Warburton, Victoria 3799

Tel: +61 (0) 3 5966 5999, Fax: +61 (0) 3 5966 5998

New Zealand

Bodhinyanarama

17 Rakau Grove, Lower Hutt, Wellington

Tel: (04) 563-7193, Fax: (04) 563-5125

email: sangha@actrix.gen.nz

Auckland Buddhist Vihara

29 Harris Road, Mt. Wellington, Auckland

Tel: (09) 595 5443

North America

Abhayagiri Monastery

16201 Tomki Road, Redwood, Valley, CA 95470

Tel: (707) 485-1630, Fax: (707) 484-7948 Website: www.abhayagiri.org

1.3 Wat Raem Poeng

information by Maggie and Dieter using leaflet, last updated March 2003

Address: preregistration recommended!
Northern Insight Meditation Center
Wat Ram Poeng (Tapotaram)
Tambol Suthep, Amphur Muang
Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand
Tel: +66-53-27 86 20, Fax: +66-53-81 01 97
E-mail: watrampoeng@hotmail.com

Location: The Insight Meditation Center is some kilometres northwest of Chiang Mai (close to the airport). On the grounds there are a beautiful old stupa, smaller clusters of buildings with individual cells for meditators, bungalows, kitchen and dining hall as well as some other buildings.

How to get there: From Bangkok take the night train (approx. 13 hs), bus, plane (approx. 1 h) to Chiang Mai. From Chiang Mai take a tuk tuk or shared taxi to the Wat (depending on your bargaining skills, 50 to 100 Baht).

Tradition: Theravada, Vipassana meditation in the Mahasi tradition.

Teacher and abbot: Ajahn Suphan, an expert for Abidhamma. Pleasant and friendly atmosphere. Meditators receive very helpful and clear instructions for practice in daily interviews.

Focus: Intensive meditation practice.

Technique and schedule of retreat: Meditators practise in their rooms or at a location of their choosing. All meditators receive individual instructions. During the retreat, the four foundations of mindfulness (observing the body, feelings, mind and mind objects) are practised. All arising phenomena are noted mentally. Initially, the primary object of meditation during sitting is the rising and falling of the abdomen and during walking the movement of the foot. Each period of meditation begins with a mindful prostration, followed by walking meditation and a sitting period. Walking and sitting periods are of equal duration. Beginners start with 10 minutes and gradually increase to an hour.

Language(s): Interviews in English or Thai.

Duration of courses and dates: An introductory course is about four weeks (26 days). Since courses are individual, there are no particular dates. Retreats start following an opening ceremony. Persons who have already taken a course at the center can participate in 10-day courses.

Accommodation: Women and men live in pleasant small single rooms in separated quarters. Thin mattress on concrete or wooden floor. If this is too hard, bring sleeping pad. Blankets can be borrowed. A sleeping bag is particularly useful during the cooler season.

Shopping: Items of daily use (toothpaste, chocolate, coffee, Coke and laundry detergent) can be bought in a small shop at the Wat. Meditation pillows and digital alarm clocks can be bought in Chiang Mai. White clothing sometimes can be borrowed.

Food: Breakfast (6 a.m.) and lunch (10:30 a.m.) are varied and of good quality. There is always a choice of two or three vegetarian meals and sometimes fruit. After noon no meals should be taken (drinks such as milk, tea, coffee, and yoghurt are permitted). Drinking water is filtered and therefore potable (to be safe, bring own disinfectant, or boil).

Medical care: Very good by Asian standards. The closest clinics are in Chiang Mai. The region is not considered malaria area, but in other parts of Thailand malaria is endemic. Hygienic conditions in the Wat are good.

Costs: Donation.

Rules: Participants commit themselves to observe the eight silas (moral precepts). Clothing should be white, comfortable, and decent (no shirts or tank tops). Wake-up call is at 4 a.m.

Climate and best time to go: November to March.

Note: A warm jacket is useful during morning meditation.

Note: Good conditions, intensive practice, and expert individual instruction.

1.4 Wat Phra Dhatu Sri Chomtong Voravihara (pronounce: Wat Prah Tat)

by Dieter Baltruschat and Phra Claus, last updated March 2003

Address: early registration recommended
Insight Meditation Center
Wat Phra Dhatu Sri Chomtong Voravihara
T. Ban Luang, A. Chomtong, Chiang Mai 50160, Thailand
Tel. + Fax: +66-53-826869
www.sirimangalo.org

Location: The Insight Meditation Center is in Chomthong near Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. The main temple houses the famous Takkhinamolli-relic. Meditation courses take place in a fairly quiet area near the main temple. On the grounds there are bungalows, two meditation halls, kitchen, and dining hall as well as some other buildings.

How to get there: From Bangkok take the night train (about 13 hs), bus or plane (about 1 h) to Chiang Mai. From Chiang Mai to Chomtong during 5 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. bus No 1232 (blue-white) leaves approximately every 30 min (23 Baht). Depart at Chiang Mai gate, the old city's southern gate. Yellow pick-ups also travel the route (about 20 Baht).

Tradition: Theravada, Vipassana meditation in the Mahasi tradition.

Spiritual guidance: Ajahn Tong is in his early eighties and one of Thailand's most famous meditation teachers.

Focus: Intensive meditation practice.

Meditation technique and course of retreat: Practitioners practice in their own bungalows or at a location of their choosing. All practitioners receive individual meditation instructions. During the retreat the four bases of mindfulness (observing body, feelings, mind, and mind objects) are practiced and all arising phenomena are noted mentally. Initially the rising and falling of the abdomen is the primary object of meditation during sitting, and the movement of the foot during walking. Each period of meditation begins with a mindful prostration. A period of walking meditation and a period of sitting follow. Beginners start with 10 minutes and increase gradually to an hour.

Teacher: Kate and Thanat Chindaporn or Edward Kooij and Jodi Snijders. Pleasant atmosphere. In the daily interviews meditators receive very helpful and clear instructions for practice.

Language(s): Interviews in English oder Thai.

Course duration and dates: A beginners' course is approximately three weeks. Since courses are individual no particular dates need to be observed. The retreat begins with an initiation ceremony. Persons who have already taken a course at the center can participate in 10-day courses.

Accommodation: Kutis (bungalows) with bath and toilet (plenty of water and laundry facilities). Men and women live in separate quarters. Thin mattresses on concrete or wood. If this is too hard for you, bring a sleep pad. Blankets can be borrowed. A sleeping bag and fleece jacket are particularly useful during the cooler season.

Shopping: Daily necessities, meditation pillow and white clothes can be bought in the small shops or the market outside the Wat. A **digital alarm clock**, flashlight, flip-flops, water bottle, insect repellent, toiletries and possibly tea and coffee should be bought before the retreat. If there is no electric kettle in your bungalow, you can buy one in Chomtong (approx. 180 Baht).

Food: Breakfast (6 a.m.) and lunch (11 a.m.) are varied and of good quality. There is always a choice of two or three vegetarian dishes and sometimes fruit. After noon no meals should be taken (drinks such as milk, tea, coffee, and yoghurt are permitted). Drinking water is filtered and therefore potable. To be even more sure, bring disinfectant or boil water.

Medical care: In Chomtong there are pharmacies and a serviceable hospital with English-speaking doctors. This area is not considered contaminated with malaria, but in other parts of Thailand malaria is common. The hygiene in the Wat is good.

Costs: Donation.

Rules: Participants vow to adhere to the eight moral precepts (moral practice rules). Clothing should be white, comfortable, and decent (no shorts or tank tops). Wake-up call at 4 a.m.

Climate and best time to go: November to March.

Note: Good conditions, intensive practice, and expert individual instruction.

Vipassana courses in this tradition are also offered in Germany at Wat Buddha Piyawararam in Götzenhain near Frankfurt/Main (Dietzenbacher Str. 6, Tel: 06103/831959, Fax: 831958). The Israeli monk Phra Ofer (speaks English) instructs there. E-mail: oferadi@hotmail.com

1.5 Wat Doi Phra Koet

by Pra Claus; last updated August 2003

Address: Wat Doi Phra Koet

T. Ban Luang, A. Chomthong, Chiang Mai 50160, Thailand

No telephone – best just go there. Chances are excellent that you can stay.

Location: Wat Doi Phra Koet monastery (pronounce: Wat Dooi Prah Got) is reached by Samloh (motor tricycle) or motorbike taxi from Chomthong for approx. 20 Baht. It is 4 km west of Chomthong on the road to the Mae-Ya waterfall on a wooded hill (secondary jungle with many birds). The vista is beautiful. On the grounds there are several new religious sculptures of varying artistic quality. Several gazebos provide you with ideal places to relax.

Accommodation: Four large new and fairly comfortable rooms with shower and toilet in a shady house and some empty kutis (small bungalow), some of these newly constructed.

Teacher: Abbot Ajahn Thawin is a disciple of Ajahn Tong and speaks a fair English. His brother Ajahn Montri speaks English quite well and is in charge of the occasional foreign guests. You can also ask him for meditation advice, but he seems quite content if yogis don't need his advice.

Food: Two nonvegetarian meals: very simple breakfast and tasty and abundant lunch at about 11 a.m.

Note: Good place for people who seek tranquility and want to follow their own program, e.g. after a 10-day retreat at Wat Pra Tat in Chomthong.

1.6 Wat Phradhatu Doi Suthep

from Phra Noah Yuttadhammo; last updated March 2005

Address: International Buddhism Center Wat Phradhatu Doi Suthep
Tambol Suthep, Amphur Muang, 14 Srivichai Road
Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand
Tel: 0066-53-29 50 12
web: <http://doisuthep.sirimangalo.org>
e-mail: doisuthep@sirimangalo.org

Location: Doi Suthep is famed for its serene and peaceful environment, giving visitors the impression that there really might be angels guarding its pristine beauty. Close enough to be seen from Chiang Mai City, and with a breathtaking view of Thailand's Northern Capital, the monastery is quiet and peaceful, with ancient trees, birds and the occasional fog covering the grounds. The meditation center is fully functional and growing always.

How to get there: From Bangkok take the night train (about 13 hours), bus or plane (about 1 hour) to Chiang Mai. From Chiang Mai to Doi Suthep with Tuk Tuk (200-300 Baht) or red-taxi (about 40-80 Baht). Here walk the 290 steps or take the lift (30 Baht).

Tradition: Theravada, Vipassana-Meditation in the Mahasi Sayadaw Tradition.

Spiritual guidance: Ajaan Tong is in his early eighties and one of Thailand's most famous meditation teachers.

Focus: Intensive meditation practice.

Teacher: Phra Noah Yuttadhammo (Student of Ajahn Tong). Pleasant atmosphere. In the daily interviews meditators receive very helpful and clear instructions for practice.

Meditation technique and course of retreat: Practitioners practice in their own bungalows or in the meditation hall. All practitioners receive individual meditation instructions. During the retreat the four bases of mindfulness (observing body, feelings, mind, and mind objects) are practiced and all arising phenomena are noted mentally. Initially the rising and falling of the abdomen is the primary object of meditation during sitting, and the movement of the foot during walking. Each period of meditation begins with a mindful prostration. A period of walking meditation and a period of sitting follow. Beginners start with 10 minutes and increase gradually to an hour.

Every week there is a Dhamma talk. It is possible to go to the daily chanting.

Language(s): Interviews in English or Thai.

Course duration and dates: A beginners' course is approximately three weeks. Since courses are individual no particular dates need to be observed. The retreat begins with an opening ceremony and ends with a closing ceremony. Persons who have already taken a course at the center can participate in 10-day courses.

Accommodation: Men and women live in separate quarters. Thin mattresses on concrete or wood. If this is too hard for you, bring a sleep pad. Blankets, meditation pillow and pillow can be borrowed. A sleeping bag and fleece jacket are particularly useful during the cooler season.

Shopping: Daily necessities can be bought in the small temple-shops. A **digital alarm clock**, flashlight, flip-flops, water bottle, insect repellent, toiletries and possibly tea and coffee should be bought before the retreat. You can buy this in Chiang Mai.

Food: Breakfast (6:30 a.m.) and lunch (11 a.m.) are varied and of good quality. There is always a choice of two or three vegetarian dishes and sometimes fruit. After noon no meals should be taken (drinks such as milk, tea, and yoghurt are permitted). Drinking water is filtered and therefore potable. To be even more sure, bring disinfectant or boil water.

Medical care: In Chiang Mai there are pharmacies and a serviceable hospital with English-speaking doctors. This area is not considered contaminated with malaria, but in other parts of Thailand malaria is common. The hygiene in the Wat is very good.

Costs: Donation.

Rules: Participants vow to adhere to the eight moral precepts (moral practice rules). Clothing should be white, comfortable, and decent (no shorts or tank tops). Wake-up is at 4 a.m.

Climate and best time to go: November to March.

Note: Good meditation condition, Intensive meditation practice and clear instructions for practice. The centre is growing and looking for persons who want stay long term.

1.7 Wat Kow Tahm International Meditation Center

by Dieter Baltruschat, using a leaflet and the homepage; updated from Steve Weissman July 2004

Address: P.O. Box 18, Koh Pahngan, Surat Thani 84280, Thailand
Internet: www.watkowtahm.org, E-mail: info@watkowtahm.org
Early registration recommended!! Arrival one day ahead of course between 1 and 2 p.m.!!

Winter season 2005–2006: December 14–23, January 17–26 (special old & new students' retreat), February 14–23, March 13–22

Sommer 2006: June 13–22, July 8–17, July 8–27 (old students) and August 17-26

Location: Wat Kow Tahm is beautifully situated on a wooded hill near the village of Ban Khai on the well-known holiday island Koh Phangan. It is not too large, cosy, and has lovely vistas of the island and the sea. Basically it consists of the meditation hall, kitchen, and several small dorms for the participants, washing facilities and huts for the monks and nuns.

How to get there: From Bangkok by train or plane to Surat Thani. The train ride takes approx. 13 h. The 2nd class sleeper is recommended (reserve!). From Surat Thani or Phun Phin (train station) to the ferry pier and by ferry to Koh Phangan. Purchase of a combined train/ferry ticket is recommended. It is faster to fly directly from Bangkok to Ko Samui and take the ferry to Koh Phangan. There are two ferry routes from Ko Samui to Ko Phangan: one from Nathon and a shorter from Big Buddha Beach, the latter of which is much closer to the airport. From Thong Sala pier take a taxi or motorbike taxi. Since some taxi drivers do not go up the bit from the main road to the Wat, you may have to walk it, but it is fairly short.

Teacher: Rosemary and Steve Weissman have been teaching since 1988. The atmosphere is pleasant and in three interviews meditators receive very helpful advice for practice and everyday problems.

Course and duration of retreat: A course usually runs 10 days. The program includes insight meditation (in all body positions), development of loving kindness, reflections, stretching exercises in the morning, and quite interesting lectures. For former students of Rosemary and Steve Weissman a 20-day course is held every two years. Sometimes, after the 10 days, there is a possibility of staying on for a few

days in the monastery to end the course with a reduced program.

Language(s): English.

Costs and shopping: The 10-days course fee of 4000 Baht covers the cost of lodging and food. Further donations are welcome. Daily necessities can be bought in Thong Sala (the ferry port). Before the retreat, buy **flashlight**, flip-flops, water bottle, insect repellent, detergent, and toiletries.

Accommodation and food: Rather small dorms. Bath and toilet are set apart from the quarters. Laundry facilities exist. Men and women are in separate quarters. Bunk beds with thin straw mattresses. Blankets, mosquito nets, pillows for sleeping and for meditation and pads for sitting can be borrowed. A sleeping bag can be particularly useful during the cooler season. Persons with back problems should bring a good quality sleep pad. Outside retreat times no overnight stays possible. Excellent Asian cuisine (self-service). Breakfast, lunch with rice and two to three vegetarian dishes and fruit in the evening. Drinking water available.

Medical care: Very good by Asian standards. This area is not considered contaminated with malaria, but in other parts of Thailand malaria is endemic.

Rules: All participants commit themselves to stay for the entire retreat, to adhere to schedule, to keep silence, not to read and write (except notes and meditation diary). Sexual activities are to be discontinued for the duration of the retreat and the five silas (moral practice precepts) to be adhered to. Clothes should be comfortable and decent (no shorts and tank tops). Each participant is expected to assume a task serving the community (e.g. sweeping, cleaning baths).

Climate and best time to go: January, February, March. During the main season from December to February and in July / August it is very crowded.

Note: Excellent for beginners. Aside from the crowded living quarters very good conditions.

1.8 Wat Pah Ban Thad

information by Dieter Baltruschat using Bill Weir's retreat guide; updated March 2004
by Gerd Neller

Address: Wat Pa Baan Taad, Baan Taad, Amphur Meuang, Udon Thani 41000
no preregistration necessary, but recommended
Internet: www.luangta.com

Location: Wat Pah Ban Thad is a quiet forest monastery 16 km southeast of the city of Udon Thani in Northeastern Thailand, approximately 564 km from Bangkok. There are a large dhamma hall and several kutis (bungalows) in the forest. About 50 monks and 100 women live here.

How to get there from Bangkok: From Bangkok to Udon Thani there are several morning trains (e.g. sprinter, departure 8:20 a.m., arrival 5:20 p.m.) and several night trains, (e.g. sleeper, departure 8:45 p.m., arrival 7:12), and a sprinter without sleeper (departure 8:00 p.m., arrival 4:46 a.m.).

From the northern bus terminal there are daily busses to Udon Thani, departing from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. The trip is about 12 hours.

Thai Air has three daily flights from Bangkok to Udon Thani (6:50 a.m., 12:35 p.m., 6:15 p.m.). The trip is about one hour.

From Udon Thani take a songtaew (e.g. No 44), local bus or taxi to the town of Ban Gum Kling 8 km south, then 7 km head southwest via the village Ban That, from there it is another 1 km to the Wat. Some songtaew go from Udon Thani directly to the Wat or to Ban Thad.

Tradition and teacher: Phra Ajahn Maha Boowa, the abbot of the monastery, is one of the most famous meditation teachers in Thailand and one of the last disciples of the almost legendary Ajahn Mun still alive. (There is a small Ajahn Mun museum in Wat Pa Sutthawat at Sakon Nakhon, approx. 100 kilometres east of Udon Thani.)

Unfortunately Ajahn Pannavaddho, who was held in great esteem because of his profound knowledge and his friendly nature died on August 18, 2004. The German monk Than Martin has been living in Wat Pah Ban Thad for nine years now. Apart from extensive translation activities he is in charge of the monastery's homepage and gives dhamma talks and (group) interviews – mainly in German language. Due to his deep experience, his engagement and his empathy he has already been able to help a lot of practitioners.

Language(s): Thai, English, and sometimes German.

Technique: Instructions for formal meditation practice are found in the book „Forest Dhamma“ by Ajahn Maha Bua. Initially, the mind is calmed with traditional practices such as Anapanasati, the mental intoning of the mantra Buddhho (or Dhammo or Sangho) or the contemplation of the 32 body parts. As usual, three levels of samadhi are distinguished. In khanika samadhi, or momentary concentration, the mind (citta) is only calmed for a short time. In upacara samadhi, approach concentration lasts longer. And in appana samadhi, jhana (absorption) is attained. When sufficient concentration has been established, the three characteristics (impermanence, suffering und non-self) are contemplated, the five khandha (five groups of clinging) are seen through and ignorance (*avijja*) is forever extinguished.

Costs: Guests are welcome to give a donation.

Accommodation: Since the monastery is well-known, you should not arrive during monastic raining season retreat or religious holidays. In the men’s quarters there are kutis (bungalows), in the women’s dorms or lan (small roofed platforms in the forest).

What to bring: Before your stay you should buy alarm clock, a **good flashlight** (spare bulb and batteries), flip-flops, water bottle, **insect repellent**, hygiene articles, candles, and matches. A warm jacket and a sleeping bag is useful, especially during the cooler season.

Food: The only meal of the day is a large and excellent breakfast. Late afternoons there are juices or tea and some sweets. For increased safety of potable water bring disinfectant.

Medical care: Good by Asian standards. In the province capital Udon Thani there are pharmacies and hospitals. This area is not considered contaminated with malaria.

Rules: All participants commit themselves to observing the eight silas (moral practice precepts). Clothes should be comfortable and decent (no shorts and tank tops).

Daily schedule: After the monks’ alms round breakfast, then cleaning up in and around the sala. Afternoons the community meets for tea or for sweeping the paths.

Plenty of time for individual practice.

Climate and best time to go: November to March.

Notes: W.A.V.E. has published the following English language books by Phra Ajahn Maha Bua (a.k.a. Maha Boowa):

- Forest Dhamma (possibly out of print)
- A Life of Inner Quality
- To the Last Breath – Dhamma Talks on Living and Dying
- Wisdom Develops Samadhi
- Kammathana (possibly out of print)
- Things as they are
- Straight from the Heart
- Mode of Practice of Acharn Mun
- Biography of Acharn Mun

These free books can be ordered here for a donation to cover postage:

Mrs Lim Tay Poh
c/o No 2, Jalan Chan ah Thong
Off Jln Tun Sambathan
50470 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

(Of course, donations for further publications are also welcome). They can also be downloaded at www.luangta.com/English/site/books.html.

1.9 Sorn-Thawee Meditation Centre (Samnak Vipassana Sorn)

by Dieter Baltruschat using Bill Weir's retreat guide; updated March 2003

Address: **early registration mandatory!**

(if Ajahn Charlee is not there, possibly no one speaks English)

Sorn-Thawee Meditation Centre

Bangkla

Chachoengsao 24110, Thailand

Location: The very well-known center is surrounded by fields approximately 20 km from Chachoengsao in the district of Bangkla, approx. 80 km east of Bangkok. On the very pleasant grounds there are bungalows, trees, ponds, and a large dhamma hall. Very friendly atmosphere.

How to get there: Best by bus from Bangkok (northern or eastern bus terminal) to Chachoengsao. Then change for the bus to Bangkla. After approx. 25 min. (shortly after a 17 km road mark where the bus turns to the left) get off. Cross the main road and follow the road about 300 m south, then turn right. The center is another 300 m.

Tradition and focus: Intensive Vipassana meditation in Mahasi tradition.

Teacher: Phra Ajahn Charlee Jaruvanno.

Meditation technique: Meditators receive individual instructions daily. During the retreat the four bases of mindfulness (observing the body, the feelings, the mind, and the mind objects) are practiced. All arising phenomena are noted mentally. The primary object of meditation during sitting is the rising and falling of the abdomen and during walking the movement of the foot. Formal practice should be eight to twelve hours daily. All other activities should also be carried out mindfully.

Language(s): Interviews in Thai or English.

Duration of retreats and dates: Since courses are individual there are no particular dates to observe. Recommended duration of stay is 50 days. 20 days are considered minimum. Only meditators staying for at least two weeks are accepted.

Rules: All participants vow to observe the eight silas (moral precepts) and noble

silence. Wake-up is at 4 a.m.

What to bring: Before retreat, acquire digital alarm clock, flashlight, flip-flops, water bottle, **insect repellent**, and toilet articles. A sleeping bag is particularly useful during the cooler season. A warm jacket is recommended for morning meditation.

Lodging: Individual kutis (bungalows) with bath and WC or single rooms.

Food: Breakfast (6:30 a.m.) and lunch (11 a.m.) are varied and of good quality. Bring disinfectant to increase drinking water safety.

Costs: There is a daily fee (it used to be US\$ 2) for running costs. Further donations for maintaining the center are welcome.

Climate and best time to go: November to March.

Note: Well suited for beginners and highly recommendable for its excellent conditions, intensive practice and expert individual instruction.

1.10 Wat Sanghathan Meditation Center (outskirts of Bangkok)

information: Sunny and homepage

Address: Wat Sanghathan
Bangphai, Muang, Nonthaburi 11000, Thailand
Tel: +66 (2) 4471766 oder +66 (2) 4470799, Fax 02-4472784
Internet: www.vimokkha.com, E-mail: vimokkha@hotmail.com

Description: The center is a quiet place for meditation. It consists of about 100 rai along the Chao-Phraya river. Many trees, ponds, and beautifully landscaped gardens let you forget that Bangkok is right there. The Uposoth hall contains the Buddha image Luangpho Toh. It is about 200 years old, 10 m high and 4 m wide and constitutes the Wat Sangathan sanctum.

How to get there:

Bangkok–Nonthaburi

1. From Bangkok Nonthaburi is reached easiest with the "Chao-Phraya express boat". You can embark at every quai in Bangkok. Get off at station No 28 „Wat Kein (from Banglampoo about 40 min.); from there 5 min. walk.
2. From Silom Road in the center of Bangkok take bus No 106 (air-conditioned) to Nonthaburi.

Nonthaburi–Wat Sanghathan

Cross the river with the ferry and take a red pick-up taxi to Wat Sanghathan (the last in the row).

Meditation system: The four basics of mindfulness (Satipatthana), observation of breath (Anapanasati) and other methods mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures.

Teaching method: Beginners are introduced to the technique. Later they participate in regular interviews. Sitting and walking meditation also in a group setting (see daily schedule).

Teacher: Ven. Acharn Sanong, abbot, 56. Acharn Sanong speaks Thai and a little English. Several resident monks and nuns can help with translations.

Accommodation: Lay meditators are given a single room or a bed in the dorms. Women sleep in the nuns' section, men in the monks'.

Registration: For participation in an intensive course in Ban Sawangjai Center (Kao-Yai national park) registration is recommended.

Ordaining: It is possible to ordain as a monk or nun. You should have spent some time as lay meditator in the temple before, though.

Size: Monks: 100–300, novices: 10–300 (during school holidays only), nuns: 30, lay meditators: 40–100.

Food: One meal daily only. A rich variety of Thai dishes is offered buffet-style. It always includes some vegetarian dishes.

Costs: Free of charge. Donations are welcome.

Rules: All participants commit themselves to observe the eight silas (moral precepts). Clothing should be white, comfortable, and decent (no shorts or tank tops). Permission is given to stay 7 days in Wat Sanghathan to meditate and study the Buddhadhamma. If you want to stay longer, you must ask the permission of Acharn Sanong. For your first stay in Wat Sanghathan please bring 2 passport pictures. Smoking is not permitted in the temple, and one should try to adhere to the daily schedule, observe noble silence, and respect the division of the sexes.

Daily schedule:

4:00 a.m.: morning chanting until 4:30 a.m. – then sitting meditation
6:00 a.m.: warm drinks in the kitchen
7:30 a.m.: walking meditation in the wood
9:30 a.m.: main meal (buffet)
12:30 a.m.: chanting and meditation behind the hall
3:30 p.m.: working meditation
4:30 p.m.: walking meditation behind the hall
5:30 p.m.: afternoon drinks and break for washing, laundry, rest
7:00 p.m.: evening chanting
8.00 p.m. sitting meditation in the dhamma hall

1.11 Ban Sawang Jai (Khao Yai Meditation Center)

by Jörg Dittmar, June 2004

Address: Ban Sawang Jai
Klongdea, Moosri, Pak Chong, Nakorn Ratchasima 30130, Thailand
Tel: +66-44-312183
Contact: Mae Chee Brigitte Schrottenbacher
E-mail: bansawangjai@hotmail.com
Internet: <http://www.vimokkha.com/kaoyaisaengeng.html>

Head Monastery: **Wat Sanghathan**
Bangphai, Muang, Nonthaburi 11000, Thailand
Tel: +66-2-44 71 766 or +66-2-44 70 799, Fax: +66-02-4472784
Internet: www.vimokkha.com, E-mail: vimokkha@hotmail.com

Location: Ban Sawang Jai (house of the enlightened heart), a branch of Wat Sanghathan, is located about 250 km northeast of Bangkok. A beautiful, quiet and spacious place, about 3 km from the main gate of Khao Yai National Park. The area is very green, with grass, fields, bushland, banana trees around a hill, the center of the monastery. Places for practice are plenty. There are some quite comfortable huts (kutis) for lay meditators, a large meditation hall (used mainly during the intense meditation course) and the monks' area around the hill. Here also is the hall containing the buddha image, the kitchen, a cave that is being prepared as a place for services, and other infrastructure.

Travel: From Bangkok Northern Bus Terminal by Air Con Bus to Pak Chong (110 Baht). From Bus Terminal Pak Chong by taxi to Ban Sawang Jai (200 Baht, need to bargain). Some taxi drivers do not know the way though it is easy to find. Go to Khao Yai National Park main gate (everybody knows this one). Approaching the gate (about 500 m beforehand) a road goes left. There is a sign saying "Ban Sawang Jai" in English and Thai. Follow this road for 4 km. Then on the left you will find the entrance with a big sign in English and sort of a stone monument in Thai. There also are pick-up trucks available (20 Baht). Leave Pak Chong Bus Terminal to main road. Walk 10 minutes to the right. Cross the road to "Seven-eleven" shop. Pick-up trucks are waiting in front. Participants of the meditation course (see below) will be picked up by bus from Wat Sanghathan, Nonthaburi.

Reservations: For participation in the meditation course a reservation some time ahead is advisable. Otherwise just contact Mae Chee Brigitte.

Meditation Course: Once a month (starting first saturday of every month) a one week intense meditation course is held. Participants are mainly Thai people from Bangkok area. Language is Thai (in teachings, talks, guided meditations, etc.). Some teachings will be translated by Mae Chee Brigitte. After the 7-days course participants are welcome to stay longer in Khao Yai Meditation Center.

System of Meditation: According to Wat Sanghathan, especially during courses. Individual practice is possible (i.e. for more experienced meditators already using other systems). Beginners will be introduced to vipassana meditation. Possibility of regular interviews. There are also sitting and walking meditations in groups (daily schedule see below).

Teachers: Meditators stay in touch with Ven. Ajahn Tippakorn and Mae Chee Brigitte. Ajahn is the abbot, in his end-30s. He speaks English quite well. Otherwise Mae Chee Brigitte will translate. She is Austrian and speaks German, English and Thai. Mae Chee will be in reach most of the time for anyone in need of help or instructions. Ajahn talks select Dhamma subjects on some evenings. Possibility to ask questions.

Rules: 5 Silas will be expected, 8 Silas are possible. Clothes should be white, comfortable and appropriate (no shorts or sleeveless t-shirts, in case clothes can be bought or rented in the center). Keeping silent is optional, although there is a general atmosphere of quiet mindfulness. There is only one meal during the day.

Accommodation: Lay meditators will usually live in a kuti (incl. bathroom) by one or two persons only. There is enough space inside to meditate there if desired. During meditation course though, accommodation cannot be that generous. Kutis will then be occupied by 3–4 people. Many participants will sleep in the big meditation hall.

Food: Once a day there is a generous buffet of Thai food including some vegetarian dishes.

Ordination: Possibility to ordinate as a monk or nun, usually via Wat Sanghathan. In the monastery live about 15 monks, 1–2 nuns and some lay meditators from Thailand or abroad.

Fees: No fees. Donations to keep the place running are very welcome.

Things to bring: Handy will be a good torch (incl. replacement bulb and batteries), bathing slippers, a water flask, insect-repellant and personal toiletry. A warm jacket or pullover will possibly be appreciated during morning meditation. During colder season a sleeping bag is recommended.

Rough daily schedule:

5:00 a.m. Morning recitations and meditation (1 hour)
Small breakfast (hot drinks)
Walking meditation (1 hour)

9:30 a.m. Main meal together with monks
Some rest
Meditation in kuti or hall (walking, standing, sitting, 2 hours)

4:00 p.m. Walking meditation (1 hour)
Showering, laundry, other work, etc.

7:00 p.m. Evening recitations, meditation (1 hour)
Instructions and interview
Some evenings dhamma talk

Opinion of Jörg Dittmar:

Ban Sawang Jai will be ideal for people who might consider Wat Sanghathan too big or maybe too busy. For western people who speak little or no Thai and therefore would have difficulties in getting appropriate support and instructions in Wat Sanghathan. And for people who simply look for meditative peace away from Bangkok.

Ban Sawang Jai can be easily reached from Bangkok within 3 hours.

People can meditate and be instructed according to the monastery system. But there is also the possibility to continue practice as used to at home (except when participating in the course obviously). Ban Sawang Jai has a very open-minded atmosphere. Mae Chee Brigitte is a very competent and understanding person. And Ajahn Tippakorn – having travelled Europe, New Zealand and South Africa – knows well western ways of thinking and typical problems .

The 1-week meditation course is a very impressive experience. For western people

who do not speak enough Thai, though, it is more of a cultural event. It is interesting and inspiring to be involved in various activities, get in touch with Thai people, meditate together. But a large part of the daily schedule (like important guided meditations) will not be easy to make use of. Some monks give some instructions in English, too. But main language (by far!) is Thai.

Another thing is that during the course an additional 60, 80 or even more people will be living in the monastery. That will affect the general atmosphere, even though everybody would act in peace and mindfulness.

I therefore have participated in only select activities of the meditation course. And have done my individual meditation in some quiet corner (that is always possible to find).

My advice: For joining the course, arrive some days earlier in Ban Sawang Jai. Start practicing and settle in individually. Then join the course, experience how it affects your practice. After, you decide how to go on.

1.12 Santisukh Tudongsathan (Wat Pa Pae)

by Ven. Mettiko Bhikkhu updated June 2005

Address: Baan Pa Pae, Mae Taeng, Chiang Mai

Please notice that it is strictly necessary that you should have some knowledge of the Thai language, as Than Ajahn Prajoed hardly speaks English.

Apart from that it cannot be guaranteed that you will be allowed to stay because infrastructure and facilities of the place are sufficient for a limited number of guests only and no registration is possible.

Location: “Wat Pa Pae” is situated in the hills between Mae Taeng und Pai in the North of Thailand about 60 km from Chiang Mai. It features dense forest, but little sun. The monastery contains a little old sala entirely made from wood, a little kitchen, and a second open sala, as well as about 12 kutis (bungalows) in the forest. Three to five monks live in the forest. Male laypersons are accepted for individual retreats. Women can only lodge there when a male layperson lives at the Wat at that time (vinaya).

How to get there from Chiang Mai: Take the bus (direction of Fang) or Songthaew (pick-up line taxi) to Mae Malai. From there take another Songthaew into the hills to Baan Pa Pae. There is also an infrequent bus to Pai via Pa Pae. In Baan Pa Pae follow the signs (there is one in English) to the police station. Just before the post office turn right, follow the sign (Thai only) to the Wat. Ascend 1.5 km steep path to the Wat.

Tradition: Santisukh Tudongsathan used to be a station on the long Tudong trail to Mae Hong Son. With the road finished now, considerably less monks are passing through, which has its advantages.

Teacher: Than Ajahn Prajoed gives formal lectures at uposatha-days and answers questions during afternoon tea or by appointment. Ajahn Prajoed is an independent Mahanikaya forest monk, knows and lives good discipline, practices a lot and is a skilled meditation teacher.

Meditation technique: All methods pertaining to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are practised but the emphasis is on the first basis, especially observation of the 32 parts and recollection of death. Other methods of reflection are taught as well.

Costs: Guests can donate money or do purchases for the Wat (soft drinks, coffee, sugar).

Accommodation: All guests are given a kuti. The huts are plain but charming. No electricity or telephone.

What to bring: Before your stay, buy an alarm clock, a **good flashlight** (spare bulb and spare batteries), flip-flops, water bottle, and **insect repellent**. All these things can be bought in Chiang Mai.

Food: The only daily meal, breakfast, consists exclusively of the food monks gather at alms rounds. Normally this is sufficient to feed a small number of laypersons. Laypersons can put back a snack for noon. Late afternoons, there are soft drinks, coffee, or tea. Drinking water is boiled rain water.

Medical care: Good by Asian standards. In the provincial capital Chiang Mai there are hospitals and pharmacies. The area is not considered malaria contaminated, but Dengue fever has become more frequent over the past years.

Rules: All guests are obliged to adhere to the eight silas (moral precepts). Men customarily wear black trousers and a white shirt. Women wear a black or white Phaa Thung (wrap-around skirt) and a white blouse.

Daily schedule: After the monks' alms rounds breakfast at 7:30 a.m., then a small amount of cleaning and tidying in and around the kitchen. Afternoons, paths are swept, water is boiled, wood chopped and so on. Evenings, an hour of chanting and an hour of group meditation. There is much time for individual practice, and it is valued highly.

Climate and best time to go: Over 1000 m above sea level, rather continental climate. Ideal for the hot season from March to June. During rainy season, drying laundry can become a challenge.

Notes: Laypersons can stay if permission is given, but they should be able to practise independently to a degree. The monastery is run in a very traditional and vinaya way. Ajahn Prajoed rather shuns publicity to retain the Wat's quiet and „old-fashioned“ character. This has a positive influence on the conditions for practice.

1.13 Samnak Songh Boonyawat

by Ven. Mettiko Bhikkhu in 2004

Contact: Khun Suwaree
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24/99 Mu 6, Th. Bypass
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Internet: www.palungjit.com/club/kondee/
registration obligatory

Khun Suwaree is the proprietor of a large car sales company in Chonburi and the main supporter of the Wat. All contact in writing or phone is with her because the postman does not reach Boonwyawat and there is no telephone there. She speaks a fair English.

Location: “Wat” Boonyawat in Central Thailand is a 350 rai (0.56 sqkm) forest in sparsely populated area dominated by plantations, 90 km away from the provincial capital and therefore rather out of the way. The monastery has a large multipurpose dhamma hall and about 25 kutis (bungalows) in the forest. About 15 monks live there, and from time to time some laymen and -women.

How to get there from Bangkok: There are frequent busses out of the eastern bus terminal Ekamai that go the 80 km to Chonburi. The ride takes 1 to 1 ½ hours. The easiest way to continue is to take a taxi (600 Baht) for the next 90 km. The driver should take Highway 344 towards Chantaburi. Get off at the crossroads at km 60 and go the last 30 km by motorbike taxi (not more than 100 Baht).

Tradition: Than Ajahn Tan Dhiracitto is one of Luang Pho Chah Subhatto’s four main principals. Over 300 monasteries belong to Ajahn Chah’s main monastery Wat Nong Pa Phong. They are committed to one of the strictest forest traditions of Mahankaya and the entire faith.

Teacher: Ajahn Tan teaches in formal talks at uposatha-days. Daily or when required he receives lay guests and visitors. The main teaching, though, takes place when the Ajahn takes his tea in the sala. He answers questions and when the ball gets rolling, long and in-depth Dhamma talks develop. Ajahn Tan speaks a clear and Central

Thai, but no English. Usually, western monks are available for translation, e.g. Ajahn Tejapañño (NZL) and Than Sudhammo (D).

Language: Thai.

Meditation technique: Ajahn Tan places much importance on the probing contemplation of the body, alternating with periods of mental training and sharpening (samadhi). All methods of the first basis of mindfulness are used, and emphasis is placed on observation of the 32 parts and recollection of death.

Costs: Guests may give a donation.

Lodging: All guests receive a kuti. This is one of the few monasteries in which women find lodging conditions that equal the mens'. Because of the size of the Wat there are appropriate distances between neighbours, so women live equally isolated in individual huts as men do. Kutis are modern and well-appointed but without electricity. The entire Wat is still lit by petrol lamps at night which contributes to the spiritual atmosphere of the place.

What to bring: Before your stay you should bring an alarm clock, a **good flashlight** (spare bulb and batteries), flip-flops, water bottle, **insect repellent**. All these things are available in Chonburi.

Food: The only meal of the day is breakfast. It is nourishing and very good. Laypersons can put aside some for a snack just before noon. Late afternoons, there is juice or tea. Drinking water is filtered.

Medical care: Good by Asian standards. In the province's capital, Chonburi, there are clinics and pharmacies. The area is not considered malaria area.

Rules: All guests commit themselves to adhere to the eight silas (moral precepts). Men usually wear white or black trousers and a white shirt. Women wear a black or white Phaa Thung (wrap-around skirt) and a white blouse.

Daily schedule: Morning meal is after the monks' alms rounds at 8 a.m. After that, tidying and cleaning in and around the kitchen. At 10 a.m. the latest lay guests must leave the kitchen and return to their kutis. Afternoons, the community meets to sweep the paths etc. Much value is placed on intensive individual practice and there is much

time for it.

Language(s): Simple English, translation into German is possible.

Climate and best time to go: Typical sea climate in one of the rainiest regions of Thailand. There is plenty of rain also in the hot season, so temperatures rarely are above 32 degrees Celsius, but the humidity takes some getting used to. Best time after monsoon: October to February.

Note: Laypersons may stay up to 15 days. Repeated stays are possible. The monastery is very traditional and faithful to the vinaya way. Here you can experience authentic old Thai forest tradition.

1.14 Thailand Vipassana Centre Dhamma Abha

Source: Vipassana Newsletter 2002

Address: Vipassana Centre Dhamma Abha
Baan Huayplu, Tambon Kaengsobha, Ampur Wangthong
Phitsanulok 65220, Thailand
Tel: 66-02-552 1731, e-mail: vipthai@hotmail.com

Location: The relatively new S.N. Goenka Center is situated on a picturesque, lush green plateau. In the background mountains are towering up in the east. The center itself is located in the central part of the 61 hectare ground, the buildings are in modern Thai-style. There are a lot of ponds, fruit trees and a bamboo wood.

Tradition: Vipassana according to U Ba Khin (Burma), S.N. Goenka Center.

Course duration and dates: Throughout the year. For beginners, a 10-day course is recommended. Timely preregistration is necessary. Timetable and application form can be ordered.

Focus: Silent retreats with intensive sitting meditation and a daily lecture.

Meditation technique and schedule: First three days Anapanasati, i.e. observation of breath. Concentrating on inhaling and exhaling. Breath is only observed, not

manipulated. From day three, Vipassana meditation in the tradition of U Ba Khin. In the "step by step" or "body-sweeping" method the bodily sensations are systematically observed. When the body is scanned from head to toe, another round is performed in the opposite direction. Sensations are not judged but only observed. The course ends with an exercise for the development of loving kindness.

Teacher and guidance: After 14 years of practice, his teacher U Ba Khin gave S.N. Goenka teaching permission in 1969. Goenkaj stems from a wealthy Indian industrial family and grew up in Burma where he was raised in the Hindu tradition. Today he lives in India. Since there are more than 50 centers world-wide which adhere to this tradition, Goenkaj's instructions are presented on video or audio tape.

Language(s): Thai and English.

Food: Vegetarian. If you want to be sure about water potability, bring own disinfectant.

Cost: Donation.

Rules: All participants commit themselves to stay for the entire retreat, to adhere to schedule, to keep silence, not to read and write. Sexual activities are to be discontinued for the duration of the retreat and the five or eight (old students) silas (moral practice precepts) to be adhered to. Clothes should be comfortable, white and decent (no shorts and tank tops).

Note: Well suited for serious practitioners with retreat experience, desiring intensive practice. Also suited for beginners who have no particular problem sitting for long periods of time and who are ready to submit to an intensive and stringent daily

1.15 Wat Marp Jun (Wat Subhaddabanpot)

by Bhikkhu Gavesako, 2005

Address: Wat Marp Jun (or: "Mab Chan"),
Tambon Klaeng, Amphur Meuang, Jangwat Rayong 21160
Tel/Fax: 038-617546 Internet: www.watmarpjan.org

Location: The monastery is located by the village of Marp Jun, close to the fishing town of Bahn Phe, not far from the provincial city of Rayong. The popular tourist island Ko Samet is just off the coast, but there are not many Western tourists on the beaches around Bahn Phe, this area is more used by Thai holiday-makers. The monastery is situated in a lush rain-forest of over 500 acres on the slopes of Yaidah Mountain, which rises from flat land a short distance from the coast and has TV masts at the top. The warm, humid climate and rich soil of the area give the forest of the monastery, and that of the surrounding Government Forest Reserve, its density and lushness, and also mean that the lowlands can support hundreds of small fruit orchards and rubber plantations. The story of the monastery began in late 1984 when Venerable Ajahn Anan discovered the area during a tudong (walking tour) which had taken him into the locality. The monastic community lived simply, practising meditation in close communion with the natural environment. The forest still had a wide variety of wildlife (such as bears, wild cats, deer and several different kinds of snakes), but the main difficulty facing all those who came to practise Dhamma there in the early years was malaria (it has since disappeared from the area). In 1985, a group of lay supporters offered to build a larger and more permanent Sala (meeting hall). To accommodate the expanding monastic community it was necessary to construct a two-storey building, with the basement providing both kitchen space and accommodation for lay-guests. As the number of monks, novices and nuns coming to practise at Wat Marp Jun steadily increased, the Sangha felt it necessary to construct a new meeting hall away from the kitchen and lay accommodation. Building of a two-storey hall began in 1988 on a site further up the hill, and when completed not only provided a place for meditation, but also space for an office, library, store-rooms and a large storage-tank for rain-water. In 1993, again due to the increasing size of the monastic community, it became necessary to construct a new eating hall (16m x 20m), which would also provide a space where large numbers of lay visitors could gather to receive teaching. Finally, a few years ago the new temple (Uposatha hall or Bot) was completed, and it has become the focal point for the life of the monastic community. It seemed appropriate to locate it in the highest part of the monastery,

which will also help preserve it as a quiet place for the practice of meditation. The design incorporates elements of both traditional Thai and contemporary architectural styles and the building is set on several different levels, following the contours of the hillside. The large overall area of (24m x 32m) is sufficient to accommodate large meetings of monks and laity, and the 18m high roof is intended to impart a sense of spaciousness even on occasions when large numbers of people are gathered inside. The shape of the temple resembles that of a ship, the traditional emblem of Rayong province.

How to get there: From Bangkok Eastern (Ekachai) Bus Terminal there are regular services to Bahn Phe throughout the day, the journey takes about 4 hours. From the pier in Bahn Phe it is about 20 minutes by taxi. When crossing the main road, watch out for signs to Wat Marp Jun or Wat Dhammasathit (Ajahn Fuang's monastery which is located a bit further in the same direction). Before the final turn-off (about 2 miles from the monastery), there are signs in English.

Tradition and teacher: Than Ajahn Anan Akincano is a disciple of Luang Por Chah, whose main monastery (Wat Nong Pah Pong) is in the North-East. This tradition traces its lineage back to Than Ajahn Mun (strict dhutanga-kammatthana tradition), although technically it belongs to the Mahanikaya sect -- most of the other forest monasteries belong to the Dhammayut sect. Ajahn Anan is in his early fifties, studied at university and speaks a little bit English. He was Luang Por Chah's secretary and has shown himself as a good administrator. Ajahn Anan's disciples have already set up 10 branch monasteries in Thailand. In contrast to other forest monasteries, Wat Marp Jun is quite modern and comfortable, and the monks who live there usually come from central Thailand. They will often speak some English and have a Western-style education. Ajahn Anan attracts a lot of middle-class Thais from nearby Rayong and Bangkok, and he conducts temporary ordinations primarily for students at certain times of the year. The number of monks fluctuates between 15 and 25, plus novices. In recent years there have also been about 5 Western monks (from Wat Pah Nanachat) in residence.

Language: Thai, English.

Meditation technique: In his formal talks (in the evenings or before the meal) Ajahn Anan teaches a full range of traditional Theravada meditation methods. From establishing mindfulness in daily activities such as eating, to contemplation of the 4 elements and the 32 parts of the body, spreading metta, and developing samadhi using the repetition "Buddho" with the breath. In private interviews, usually after the meal or late in the evening at the office-kuti, one can go into more detail and ask questions about one's practice (Western monks can usually translate). Ajahn Anan

also has a reputation for his familiarity with heightened levels of meditative consciousness, and for his open-minded approach to other traditions.

Costs: Guests can give a donation.

Lodging: Male guests sleep in a dormitory below the eating hall. There is a separate section for women with nice kutis. Electricity, running water, and showers are available. Men can usually be accommodated at short notice, but women should make prior arrangement to make sure there is enough space. Sometimes large groups come and stay in the monastery for a few days to practise meditation. One Thai woman is always resident and helps look after the kitchen. She also speaks English. In the past, brown-robed nuns from Amaravati stayed for longer periods of time, but that's not possible anymore, now they can only stay for a couple of weeks. White-robed mae chees don't normally live here.

What to bring: Flashlight with batteries, alarm clock, insect repellent, white clothes. There is no public phone. One can buy things conveniently in Bahn Phe (it is possible to get a ride from the monastery).

Food: Very good quality and quantity (especially on weekends). What is brought back from almsround by the monks (some go to Bahn Phe every day in a van) is shared, and then some food is also cooked in the kitchen. It is possible to eat only vegetarian food. In the late afternoon there are drinks and sweets available for everybody. Drinking water is provided, and general hygiene is comparable to the West.

Rules: All guests should keep the 8 precepts, and apart from the meal and drinks, they can join the morning and evening chanting followed by meditation. Men and women live in separate quarters, there is not much opportunity for meeting. Women might be expected to help in the kitchen in the mornings.

Daily schedule: Morning meditation at 4 a.m. (optional) followed by chanting, setting up the Sala for the meal, then the monks leave for pindapat (almsround) around 5:15 a.m. Guests help with sweeping around the Sala, and the monks join them after they return, waiting for the food to be prepared. The meal is usually eaten between 8 and 9 a.m. One can go back to one's dwelling after that and meet again for afternoon chores (sweeping, cleaning) around 2 p.m. Drinks are taken at 5 p.m., which is the main social event of the day. The evening chanting and meditation begins around 8 p.m. and can sometimes be followed by listening to a taped talk of Ajahn Chah. (They are fond of playing inspiring Dhamma CDs -- even in the morning and before the meal.) Then Ajahn Anan will often invite people to his office-kuti for a late-night drink, which can go on until 11 p.m. Generally speaking the routine is quite relaxed and easy to follow.

Climate and best time to go: There is a light breeze from the sea, which makes it more comfortable when the weather gets hot. The best time to visit is between October and February. During the rainy season it is humid and there is often a cloud hanging around the mountain. It rains here sometimes even during the hot season.

Ordination: May be possible if one speaks Thai, but normally Westerners are sent to Wat Pah Nanachat for training.

1.16 Samnak Song Tham Krabok (drug withdrawal)

Information from the internet

Address: Thamkrabok Monastery, Ampoe Koonklone, Phra Putthabat,
18120 Saraburi-Provinz, Thailand
Tel./Fax: 036-266 067 036-267 198
e-mail: THAMKRABOK@hotmail.com Internet: www.thamkrabok.org/

The Buddhist monastery of Tham Krabok has its own history. All began with nine Tudongs, ascetic travelling monks of the Hinayana section of Buddhism who had gone into recluse in a cave near nowadays' temple in 1957. They concentrated exclusively on meditation and were seeking ways to enhance it through herbal drugs. By coincidence they found a drug against opium addiction. When in 1959 the first heavy modern day sentences were dealt against opium addicts, that monastic community was the convicts' only resort.

At that time the treatment was in a trial phase, and it wasn't until three years later that the monks had perfected the herbal treatment to the extent that state agencies became interested. The government supported this important project by giving the monks some land and financial aid with which they erected nowadays' temple complex. The only condition attached to the financial support was that the monks must treat drug addicts free of charge. The "Central Security Division" in charge of the battle against drugs since works with the monks and sends drug addicts to Tham Krabok on a regular basis.

The official balance after 30 years of treatment is extremely impressive. Compared to the statistics in Germany, where drug abuse is played down, they show that of approximately 75 000 patients, 70% were discharged as cured. 25% relapsed. 5% were treatment resistant; treatment for these doomed persons had to be discontinued.

So far, the monastic community has received only one major recognition: in 1979, it was awarded the Magsaysay prize, named after the then president of the Philippines. It may be considered an award for special merit. This is but a tiny token of recognition of the quality of treatment possibilities in Thailand. International documentaries have also emphasized the advanced standard of treatment methods in Thailand. Although the underlying causes of drug abuse have not been sufficiently battled, the treatment success rate is impressive and possibly unique to Thailand. However, as yet, they have not received the attention they deserve.

The treatment at Tham Krabok is named by most patients „hell in life“. Almost all who come here to be treated come voluntarily. Men and women and many youngsters as well as foreigners from all parts of the world drag themselves, or are brought to, Tham Krabok. Probably nobody foresees that what awaits them is in fact two weeks of „hell in life“.

Prior to treatment everybody is registered. Then all patients hand over their personal belongings and don the uniform clothes, red shorts and white shirts. A monk shows each to his sleep pad. Mens' and womens' quarters are of course separate. A short introduction about the temple's history and the treatment ensue. Together, a sacrifice is made to implore the Buddha's support.

On the very first day each patient must drink a small glass of the extract and a large bucket of water. After only five minutes the process known as „the devil's exodus from the body“ begins. Row after row of patients kneel in the temple court and, twisted by cramps, vomit and throw up fountains of extract. This means extreme physical duress and causes great fear and distress because the entire body appears to burst uncontrollably. The poison of the drugs is thus supposed to be flushed out through the body's pores. This course of events is supervised by the monks. Medical personnel is available should a patient's physique prove too weak to permit him to go through with the treatment unaided.

On the second day, most patients suffer from breakdowns with uncontrollable weeping and some attempt to escape, because the treatment protocol is strictly and mercilessly followed. Every few days the extract is now replaced by another, similar extract. Fever bouts and cramps, alleviated by cold showers, are the order of the day. Severely weakened patients, however, receive a tonic as well.

The medical aspect, however, is not the only one. A 10-day program emphasising psychological aspects accompanies the treatment. This consists of meditation,

prayers, sacrifices, and discussions about the social factors of each person's drug abuse history, dealt with in group and individual sessions. Also implications for the return to society and a future life without drugs are discussed. This counselling is considered a very important element in the treatment. Light work accompanied by musical entertainment is meant to restore some psychological and physical strength.

Fairly frequently patients want to stay on after treatment – some for ever. Most are permitted to do so because all costs are covered by donations and government support. During the rehabilitation, after medical interventions are concluded, each patient can retrain vocationally. The learning of new agricultural techniques, crafts, educational hygiene programs and other means of profit are especially a chance for women. This way, many people acquire skills they didn't previously possess and, with them, a secure source of income for the future. After therapy, for the first time they are financially independent and able to provide for themselves.

This is how the monks explain their success: the treatment and the herbal extract are state of the art. Nearly 70% of success is due to the psycho-religious treatment and 30% is due to the plant extract. The extract consists of approximately 100 species of plant. Preparation follows a special recipe. Almost 80% of the herbs and plants required grow in the temple's immediate surroundings, the rest is from all over Thailand and from India.

2. Myanmar (Burma)

The Burmese as a rule are a very hospitable people and Burma is considered a relatively safe country to travel in. If you plan to use public transport you should be aware that busses are crowded and delays are frequent. Inexpensive flights to Bangkok start at US\$ 500. A return ticket Bangkok/Yangon may be as little as US\$ 200, but the regular price for return tickets from Europe is about US\$ 900.

The Return airfare from Bangkok to Yangon (Jan 2006), are
Myanmar Airline, twice daily : THB 8000 (\$200) - Old Airplanes McDonnald Douglass
Bangkok Airways, twice daily : THB 9000 (\$225) - Newer Boeing Planes
Thai Airways, twice a day , twice daily : THB 11,000+

Air Mandalay (flies directly from Chiang Mai to Yangon, once a week on Sundays?),
Return \$160

It is not recommended to change money at the airports.

Medical care is not comparable to Western standards. Hygiene and the country's greasy cuisine are a problem to some Western travelers. Hence it is important to observe the usual travel precautions for the east. Potable water is to be treated with caution. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule – the Hse Main Gon Forest Meditation Center cuisine offers no doubt one of the best monastery cooking in Asia. There are a number of excellent meditation teachers and monasteries with very good conditions for practice. Especially those interested in Mahasi Sayadaw's method find ideal possibilities for long-term retreats. But also for those interested in intensive Sammatha-practice in Pa-Auk Sayadaw's tradition or in Vipassana methods relatively unknown in the West, such as Mogok Sayadaw's, Burma is ideal. English is more widely spread than in Thailand and hence in most monasteries translators can be found.

Permission of Entry: A visa is compulsory!

Tourist visa is valid four weeks. If you want to enter with a meditation visa you must ask for a so-called sponsorship letter from the center which must be sent to the Burmese embassy together with the visa application. For processing, reckon on about three months. Visa extensions are also possible. Take sufficient passport pictures (about 10) for the various forms.

Visa regulations do change once in a while, and one should check with the relevant people prior to making traveling plans!

Some information about traveling to Myanmar which a friend have sent in Jan 06

Tourist Visa (4 week visa) if applied in Myanmar embassy in Bangkok costs around \$20 and takes 2-3 processing days. It is possible to pay additional money and get the visa within 24 hours (+\$5), or the same day afternoon (+\$10 , if applied in the morning). however there is sometimes a long queue and you might even have to stand in the queue for two consecutive days to get the visa.

The following info are from sources in Panditarama (a Burmese monatory)

1-It is possible to extend a tourist visa to three months, and it would cost around \$72. (the processing takes 3~4 weeks, so you should apply for extention as soon as you arrive in Burma)

2-It is also possible to overstay Burmese visa and pay a \$3 per day fine at the airport. (to be verified this with the relevant embassy before you embark)

3- Having a sponsorship letter (original letter in Burmese language) from a monastery, you can apply for an entry visa in Bangkok (processing fee is \$35 for 24 hour processing time, and \$50 for same day visa, normally no long queue and preferable choice for people having little time to spare on a queue). This visa is also valid for 4 weeks but can be extended to three months in Burma for \$36 (extension in Burma takes 3~4 weeks)

4- It is possible to get a three month meditation visa from Burmese embassy in Kualalumpur, and Singapore and the processing is a few days)

We recommend the English travel guide Myanmar – A Travel Survival Kit (Lonely Planet).

2.1 Panditarama Meditation Centre (Shwe Taung Gon Sasana Yeiktha)

by Dieter Baltruschat using a leaflet of Panditarama

Address: written registration recommended!
Panditarama Meditation Centre
80-A, Thanlwin Road, Shwe Gon Dine P.O.
Bahan 11201, Yangon, Myanmar (Burma)
Tel: 0095-1-535448, 0095-1-705525
Email: panditarama@mptmail.net.mm

Infos teachers and center: web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/pandita.htm

Description: The Panditarama is situated in a fairly quiet area in a Yangon suburb. It was founded in 1990 by Ven. Sayadaw U Pandita, one of the most notable teachers of the Mahasi tradition. The rather compact center has a stylish and fairly sizeable meditation hall. There is an information office where very good books by Sayadaw U Pandita can be bought at a good price. Mainly Burmese yogis practise there. Westerners are usually recommended to go to the forest center of Hse Main Gon which is about 1 to 2 hs by car and offers ideal conditions for practice. But for many, the Panditarama is the first station because it is easily reached from Yangon center.

Spiritual guidance: Sayadaw U Pandita is over 80, teaches since 1951, is considered one of the most notable teachers in the Mahasi Sayadaw tradition and has longstanding experience with Western disciples. Teachers in the centre have an excellent reputation!

How to get there: Taxi from the airport is about US\$ 5, from Yangon center about US\$ 2.

Meditation technique: Observation of body, feelings, mind, and mind objects. Primary object of meditation during sitting is rising and falling of the abdomen. Several times per week there is an interview with the meditation teacher.

Language(s): During the interviews a translator is present, because most teachers speak little English.

Duration of courses and dates: Since there are no group retreats, no dates need to be observed.

Lodging: Clean sanitary rooms. Bed with fair mattress, sheets, blanket, pillow, mosquito net and thermos are provided by the center.

What to bring: Insect repellent, water disinfectant, and medications should be brought in sufficient quantities from home. A light sleeping bag and a warm fleece jacket are particularly useful during the winter months. Pads for sitting are available, but bring your own pillow. Items of daily use such as toiletries, flashlight, batteries, flip-flops, and water bottle, can be bought in Yangon.

Food: Meals are nourishing, tasty, and varied and are prepared hygienically. Vegetarians will have no problem. Evenings at 5 p.m., juice is available. After breakfast (5 a.m.) and lunch (10 a.m.) you can fill your thermos with hot water. Drinking water is filtered and, as a rule, potable, still be careful. If you want to be on the safe side, bring disinfectant. Sometimes large vats with mineral water are set up for refilling your bottle.

Costs: Support of the center is exclusively through donations. Thus, the center is dependent on the voluntary support through participants.

Rules: Participants should dedicate at least 14 hours a day to formal practice (walking and sitting meditation) and limit other activities (e.g., laundry) to a minimum. Reading, writing (except taking notes) and walks should be avoided. The eight silas (moral precepts) should be observed. Clothing should be comfortable, practical, and decent (no shorts or tank tops). Traditionally, white blouses and shirts are recommended. Men and women wear a brown longyi (sarong or wrap-around skirt) that can be obtained at the center.

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate. The cooler dry season from November to February are the best months. From March on very hot.

Immigration: Visa mandatory. Tourist visa is valid four weeks. If you want to enter with a meditation visa you must ask for a so-called sponsorship letter from the center, which must be sent to the Burmese embassy together with the visa application. For processing, reckon on about three months. Visa extensions are also possible. Take sufficient passport pictures (about 10) for the various forms.

Literature: Sayadaw U Pandita: "In this Very Life". It can be downloaded from the Panditarama homepage.

Note: Worth a visit, but all things considered for longer stays the forest center Hse Main Gon is better suited.

Affiliated monasteries:

- Myanmar: "Hse Main Gon" Forest Center
Pyin U Lwin (Maymyo), Mawlamyaing

 - Sydney, Australien

 - Panditarama Lumbini International Vipassana Meditation Centre
Lumbini Garden, Nepal, Tel.: 00977-71-80118,
Internet: www.Panditarama-Lumbini.info

 - Tathagata Meditation Centre (Sayadaw U Pannadipa - Abbot)
1215 Lucretia Avenue, San Jose, CA 95122, USA
Tel: (408) 294-4536, (408) 977 0300, E-Mail: apbhivamsa@yahoo.com
- Retreats in Europe: www.Vipassana-EU.org

2.2 Hse Main Gon Forest Meditation Center

by Dieter Baltruschat; last updated April 2004

Address: written preregistration recommended
contact is Panditarama Meditation Center at Yangon
Panditarama, 80-A, Thanlwin Road, Shwe Gon Dine P.O.,
Bahan 11201, Yangon, Myanmar
Tel: 0095-1-535448, 0095-1-705525
E-mail: panditarama@mptmail.net.mm
Tel: Forest Meditation Centre (Hse Main Gon): 0095-1-247211

Retreat Saddhamma-Foundation: 1.12.2005–31.1.2006

Information: Saddhamma Foundation

5459 Shafter Avenue, Oakland, CA 94618, USA

Fax/Phone: (510) 420-1039, E-mail: retreat@saddhamma.org

Web: www.saddhamma.org

Information on teachers and center: web.ukonline.co.uk/buddhism/pandita.htm

Location: The Hse Main Gon Forest Meditation Center has spacious grounds and is near the main road between Yangon and Bago, approx. one hour by car from Yangon. The area was originally covered with bamboo, there are three lakes. Reforestation projects have been running several years and many trees have been planted. The center is oriented towards the needs of Western meditators. Kutis are very comfortable. Men and women live in separate quarters. Amongst other buildings there are two large meditation halls.

How to get there: Best go to the Panditarama center in town. The center will usually organize some transport. Else take a taxi for US\$ 10–20 or the public bus (cheapest) towards Bago. Get off at the sign and walk 2 km.

Tradition: Theravada, meditation method by Mahasi Sayadaw.

Focus: Intensive Vipassana practice.

Meditation technique: The development of constant mindfulness (no breaks) is valued highly in this Vipassana method according to Mahasi Sayadaw. During formal meditation alternation is between one hour sitting and one hour walking. Outside

formal meditation mindfulness is directed towards the task of the moment: eating, walking, laundry etc. The primary object of meditation during sitting is usually the rising and falling of the abdomen. Several times per week there is an interview with the teacher.

Spiritual guidance: Sayadaw U Pandita is over 80, teaches since 1951, is considered one of the most notable teachers in the Mahasi Sayadaw tradition and has longstanding experience with Western meditators.

Teachers: Usually there is always one teacher present who can give individual instructions for meditation during the several interviews taking place every week. The center's teachers have a good reputation.

Language(s): Instructions are in Burmese and are translated into English. During interviews a translator is present because the teacher usually speaks little English.

Duration of courses and dates: Usually there are no group retreats. Recommended length of stay is three months, at the very least several weeks. It is highly recommended to participate in the yearly retreat of the Saddhamma Foundation (usually eight weeks in December and January) because then usually Sayadaw U Pandita gives the talks and the best teachers are present. Also, you have the group's support.

Lodging: Meditators live in spacious, comfortable single and double bungalows (individual rooms, shared bath with sink, shower, toilet). The long terrace is well suited for walking meditation. At certain times there is electricity. Beds have fairly good mattresses. Sheets, blankets, pillow, mosquito net, bucket for laundry, thermos, and umbrella (useful also in the hot season as sun protection) are provided.

What to bring: From home, insect repellent, water disinfectant, medications in sufficient amounts. A light sleeping bag and a warm fleece jacket are useful especially in the winter months (night and morning meditation can be rather chilly). Sitting pads are available, but a sitting pillow should be brought. Items of daily use like toiletries, flashlight, batteries, flip-flops, and water bottle can be bought in Yangon. In emergencies or during long retreats the management will do small errands (out of soap ...).

Costs: Support of the center is exclusively through donations and it is therefore

dependent upon the support of retreat participants.

Food: Breakfast at 5:30 a.m. and lunch at 10:30 a.m. Food is rich, varied, and hygienically prepared. Breakfast is quite varied (noodle soup, egg, porridge, fruit, biscuits). Lunch consists of rice, two to three vegetarian dishes (sometimes tofu), two nonvegetarian meals, and fruit, tea or coffee. Being vegetarian is no problem. Evenings, juice is available at 5 p.m.

After breakfast and lunch you can fill your thermos with hot water. Drinking water is filtered and, as a rule, potable, but do exercise caution nonetheless. You'll be safer using own disinfectant or filter or boiling water. Sometimes large vats with mineral water are set up for filling your water bottle. For longer stays, consider bringing nuts (vegetarians), vitamin tablets, and boiled sweets (taking sugar and fruit juice are permitted in the evening). Food stuffs must be kept in ant-proof containers!

Medical care: Hygienic conditions are good by Burmese standards. Malaria risk is low. Medication is scarce and must be brought in sufficient amounts (antibiotics, Halfan, first-aid kit) and should be donated when leaving. Sometimes a doctor is present.

Rules: Each participant should spend 14 hours in formal practice (walking and sitting meditation) and limit other activities (laundry etc.) to a minimum. Don't read, write (except notes), go on walks. Adhere to the eight silas (moral precepts). Clothing should be decent (no shorts or tank tops) and comfortable. Traditionally, white blouses and shirts are recommended. Men and women wear a longyi (sarong or wrap-around skirt) which is available there.

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate. The cooler dry season is from November to February (from March on very hot).

Immigration and literature: See Panditarama.

Note: Highly suitable for serious meditators with retreat experience desiring intensive practice, good conditions.

2.3 Pa-Auk Forest Meditation Center (branch near Yangon)

information by Dieter Baltruschat, last updated December 2002

Address: preregistration very recommended, but not strictly necessary
International Pa-Auk Forest Meditation Centre
Branch of Pa-Auk Forest Meditation Centre
Thilawar Road (near Kyaik-Kauk Pagoda)
Payargon Village, Thanlyin Township
Tel: 056-21927 oder 056-21830 (English)
Contact address in Yangon: U Nyunt Tin, Tel: 0095-1-577808

Main monastery: Pa-Auk Forest Monastery
c/o Major U Khan Sain (Rtd)
653 Lower Main Road, Mawlamyine, Mon State, Myanmar
Tel: 032-22132 or 057-22853

Contact at Yangon (Rangoon): Mrs. Mei Yip
Blue Star Co. Ltd., No. (4), West May Kha No. (3) Street
Mayangone Township, Yangon
Tel 01-650040, 650025, mobile 999 235 70, Fax 651473
E-Mail: bluestar@mptmail.net.mm

Internet: www.paauk.org

Location: The center is at the Thanlyin city limits, a suburb southeast of Yangon. It is fairly new. There are a nice two-floor dhamma hall, kitchen, and dining hall as well as nice little houses for the yogis. Since the trees are still small you can't really call it a forest monastery, but there are protective roofs over the main paths, so meditators are not exposed to sun and rain. The mostly older yogis accept Western practitioners with much warmth. The atmosphere is very friendly and focused at the same time.

How to get there: Best take a taxi (max. US\$ 5) from Yangon. The trip takes about an hour from the city center. You can also take the bus, which is very cheap. Best call the center beforehand. If you can't find a taxi driver familiar with the center (it is not well-known), you can go to the information center near the Sule pagoda. The friendly ladies there might do the call to the center for you and can explain the route

to the taxi driver.

Tradition: Theravada, Ven. Pa-Auk Sayadaw.

Focus: Intensive meditation practice.

Abbot and meditation teacher: Sayadaw U Eindaw Batha is an excellent teacher and expert for concentration meditation (Samatha) and jhana (absorption).

Language(s): Interviews are translated into Burmese and there is an English brochure with meditation guidelines.

Meditation technique, duration of courses and dates: Meditation practice usually takes place in the dhamma hall. Since instructions are individual, no particular date must be adhered to. In the Pa-Auk Sayadaw tradition all 40 traditional objects of meditation (Anapanasati, analysis of elements, 32 body parts, the 10 kasinas ...) are taught. Most practitioners begin with Anapanasati, but depending on personal preference and talent you can begin with a different technique. Sitting periods are usually 90 minutes. If you have problems sitting for long periods of time you can switch to practicing standing up. Sayadaw U Eindaw Batha takes care that beginners do not overdo it. After intensive concentration meditation insight meditation (Vipassana) is practiced. If you want to go deeper, you should have several months and practice in the main monastery near Mawlamyine. The center in Thanlyin is very suited to get a first impression and for shorter stays. If you want to stay longer, you will be sent to the main center Mawlamyine, because conditions there are even better (however, malaria is endemic there).

Lodging: Usually in double rooms. Showers, toilets, and laundry facilities in small buildings near the quarters. Men and women live in separate areas. A light sleeping bag is especially useful during the cooler season.

Shopping facilities: Items of daily use are available at the market. Flashlight, flip-flops, water bottle, insect repellent, toiletries, and possibly a thermos (as well as tea and coffee) you buy best in Rangoon. From home, bring sitting pillow, vitamin and mineral tablets as well as water disinfectant.

Food: Breakfast (5:30 a.m.) and lunch (10:30 a.m.) are good. There are always two to three vegetarian dishes and very rarely fruit. From noon, no meals should be

taken. Potable water is available, but disinfectant should be brought for emergencies. For longer stays, bring vitamin and mineral tablets. They are also a good gift for the monks.

Rules: Participants commit themselves to the eight silas (moral precepts) and should endeavor to develop loving kindness towards all living beings. Clothing should be decent and comfortable (no shorts or tank tops). Traditionally, white blouses and shirts are recommended. Men and women wear a longyi (sarong or wrap-around skirt) which can be obtained at every market in Burma.

Medical care: Hygienic conditions are good by Burmese standards. Malaria risk is low. Medication is scarce, must be brought in sufficient amounts (antibiotic, Halfan, first-aid kit), and should be donated when leaving. In general medical care is much worse in Burma than in Europe.

Costs: The center is supported exclusively with donations and is therefore dependent on the voluntary support of the visitors.

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate. The cooler dry season from November to February (from March on very hot) are the best months.

Immigration: A visa is mandatory! With a center's written invitation it is possible to apply for a three-month meditation visa.

Literature: A very good and free of charge book by Pa-Auk Sayadaw, "The Light of Wisdom", is available through Ng Wee Kang, 791-C, Tmn Kerjasama, Bkt Beruang, 75450 Melaka, Malaysia, or through knowing_seeing@yahoo.com. As a courtesy, enclose a fair donation for shipping costs.

Note: Very good for meditators interested in Samatha practice, those with questions regarding absorptions or those who want to get a first impression of meditation with experienced guidance. Suitable for beginners, easy to reach, good conditions.

Another branch of the monastery is in Sri Lanka:

Hon. N. Ariyadhamma Mahathera, Sri Gunawardana Yogasramaya
Gal Duwa, Kahawa, via Ambalangola 7018, Sri Lanka

2.4 Pa-Auk Forest Monastery

by Pra Claus, 1998

Address: preregistration highly recommended!
Pa-Auk Forest Monastery, c/o Major U Khan Sain (Rtd)
653 Lower Main Road, Mawlamyine, Mon State, Myanmar
Tel: 032-22132 or 057-22853

Contact at Yangon (Rangoon): Mrs. Mei Yip
Blue Star Co. Ltd., No. (4), West May Kha No. (3) Street
Mayangone Township, Yangon
Tel 01-650040, 650025, mobile 999 235 70, Fax 651473
E-Mail: bluestar@mptmail.net.mm

Internet: www.paauk.org

Location and how to get there: Pa-Auk Tawga Kyaung (Forest Monastery) is 15 km southeast of Mawlamyine. It is easiest to contact Mr U Thet in Rangoon. For a small fee he organises the trip or accompanies you personally. Else take the night train or night bus from Yangon to Mawlamyine. There you can take a rest. There are a number of hotels of varying quality and price. There is a beautiful vista from the pagoda which is worth a visit. In 1998, during day time, travel was only possible in pick-ups. If you take one of the more expensive front seats next to the driver, you can enjoy the beautiful landscape and avoid being crammed like tinned sardines on the back benches. From Mawlamyine take bus No 8 (at least one per hour) or pick-up No 8 direction of Mudon. Get off at the road to the monastery (sign!). From here you might have to walk the last 1.5 km.

Abbot and meditation teacher: The Ven. Pa-Auk Sayadaw is considered an excellent teacher and expert for concentration meditation (Samatha) and jhana (absorption). The Ven. Pa-Auk Sayadaw usually does the daily interviews with the meditators himself. He is always ready to answer questions.

Focus: Intensive meditation practice relatively close to Abhidhamma (the ethic/psychologic/philosophic system of Buddhist teaching).

Language(s): The Ven. Pa-Auk Sayadaw speaks a fair English. Interviews can be

also translated into Burmese. There is also an English book (see recommendation for reading) or a brochure with meditation instructions.

Meditation technique, duration and dates: You practice in the dhamma hall or if desired in your own kuti. Since instructions are individual, there is no particular date to observe. In the Pa-Auk Sayadaw tradition all 40 traditional objects of meditation (Anapanasati, analysis of elements, 32 body parts, the 10 kasinas ...) are taught. Most practitioners begin with Anapanasati, but depending on personal preference and talent you can begin with a different technique such as the element meditation in which you continuously scan the body for the properties of the four elements. Sitting periods are usually 90 minutes. If you have problems sitting for long periods of time you can switch to practising standing up or retreat to your kuti. After intensive concentration meditation insight meditation (Vipassana) is practised. If you want to go deeper, you should have several months time.

Lodging and food: Simple wooden kutis in rather close proximity to each other. Shared toilets and bathrooms. Two or three vegetarian meals low in protein and very rarely fruit. After 12 a.m., no meals should be taken. Potable water is available, but for emergencies bring own disinfectant.

For longer stays, bring vitamin and mineral tablets. They are also a good gift for the monks.

Rules: Participants commit themselves to the eight silas (moral precepts) and should endeavor to develop loving kindness towards all living beings. Clothing should be decent and comfortable (no shorts or tank tops). Traditionally, white blouses and shirts are recommended. Men and women wear a longyi (sarong or wrap-around skirt) which can be obtained at every market in Burma.

Shopping facilities: Items of daily use are available at the stalls along the main street. Else you have to take a pick-up to the next market. Flashlight, flip-flops, water bottle, insect repellent, toiletries, and possibly a thermos (as well as tea and coffee) you buy best in Yangon. From home, bring sitting pillow, vitamin and mineral tablets as well as water disinfectant.

Medical care: Malaria is endemic. Medication is scarce, must be brought in sufficient amounts (antibiotic, Halfan, first-aid kit), and should be donated when leaving. In general medical care is much worse in Burma than in Europe.

Costs: The center is supported exclusively with donations and is therefore

dependent on the voluntary support of the visitors.

Climate and best time to go: End of November to end of March (after that, very hot).

Immigration: A visa is mandatory! With a center's written invitation it is possible to apply for a three-month meditation visa.

Literature: A very good and free of charge book by Pa-Auk Sayadaw, "The Light of Wisdom", is available through Ng Wee Kang, 791-C, Tmn Kerjasama, Bkt Beruang, 75450 Melaka, Malaysia, or through knowing_seeing@yahoo.com. As a courtesy, enclose a fair donation for shipping costs.

Note: Relaxed atmosphere. Very well suited for meditators interested in Samatha practice, those who have questions about absorptions or those who want to practise for longer periods of time with experienced guidance.

Another branch of the monastery is in Sri Lanka:

Hon. N. Ariyadhamma Mahathera, Sri Gunawardana Yogasramaya
Gal Duwa, Kahawa, via Ambalangola 7018, Sri Lanka

2.5 Dhamma Joti Vipassana Centre

information by Dieter Baltruschat using buddhanet.net

Address: Dhamma Joti Vipassana Centre
Wingaba Yele Kyaung, Nga HtatGyi Pagoda Road
Bahan Township, Yangon, Myanmar
Tel: 0095-1-549290 and 546660
Contact: Mr Banwariji Goenka, Bandoola International Ltd.
Office No 134, Shwebontha Street, Yangon, Myanmar
Tel: 0095-1-72467, 248174, 248175, Fax: 289965
299 Bosundat Street, Yangon, Myanmar
Tel: private 0095-1-524983; office 281277
E-mail: BANDOOLAMYANMAR@mtp400.stems.com

Tradition: Vipassana according to U Ba Khin, S.N. Goenka Centre.

Course duration and dates: Usually, 10-day courses are offered. Advanced registration necessary. Schedule and application form can be ordered ahead of time.

Focus: Silent retreats with intensive sitting meditation and a daily lecture.

Meditation technique and schedule of retreat: The first three days Anapanasati, i.e. observation of breath. Concentrating on inhaling and exhaling. Breath is only observed, not manipulated. From day three, Vipassana meditation in the tradition of U Ba Khin. In the "step by step"-or "body-sweeping" method the bodily sensations are systematically observed. After the body is scanned from head to toe, another round is performed in the opposite direction. Sensations are not judged but only observed. The course ends with an exercise for the development of loving kindness.

Teacher and guidance: After 14 years of practice, his teacher U Ba Khin gave S.N. Goenka teaching permission in 1969. Goenkaj is from a wealthy Indian industrial family and grew up in Burma where he was raised in the Hindu tradition. Today he lives in India. Since there are more than 50 centers world-wide which adhere to this tradition, Goenkaj's instructions are presented on video or audio tape.

Language(s): Burmese and English. Center manager U Hlacho speaks good English.

Food: Vegetarian; if you want to be sure about water potability, bring own disinfectant.

Rules: All participants commit themselves to stay for the entire retreat, to adhere to schedule, to keep silence, not to read and write. Sexual activities are to be discontinued for the duration of the retreat and the five or eight (old students) silas (moral practice precepts) to be adhered to. Clothes should be comfortable and decent (no shorts and tank tops).

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate. The cooler season from November to February (from March on very hot) is best.

Costs: The center is supported exclusively with donations and is therefore dependent on the voluntary support of the visitors.

Immigration: Visa mandatory!

Note: Well suited for serious practitioners with retreat experience desiring intensive practice. Also suited for beginners who have no problem sitting for long periods of time and who are ready to submit to an intensive and stringent daily schedule.

2.6 Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha Meditation Centre

source: leaflet and internet

Address: Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha Meditation Centre
Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organisation
No 16, Sasana Yeiktha Road, Bahan Township
Yangon, 11201 Myanmar (Burma)
Tel: 95 - 1 - 541971, 545918
Fax 289960, 289961
Internet: www.mahasi.org.mm

Location: The center is at the Yangon city limits. It was founded in 1949 by Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw. Mainly Burmese yogis practise there. There is an information office where English books by Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw can be bought at a very good price. There are over 100 buildings on the grounds for housing and retreat facilities.

How to get there: Taxi from the airport (20 min.) is about US\$ 5, from Yangon center about US\$ 2. The Centre is at the junction of Kaba-Aye Pagoda Road/Sasana Yeiktha Road.

Meditation technique: Observation of body, feeling, mind, and mind objects. Primary object of meditation during sitting is rising and falling of the abdomen. Several times per week there is an interview with the meditation teacher.

Language(s): During the interviews, a translator is present, because most teachers speak little English.

Duration of courses and dates: Since there are no group retreats, no dates need to be observed. Six to twelve weeks are recommended.

Tradition: Theravada, intensive Vipassana meditation according to Mahasi Sayadaw

Lodging: Monks, nuns, men and women are housed separately. Lodging is assigned on arrival. Rooms are either single or double and are furnished with bed and bedding. Toilets and washing facilities are adequate. If possible, foreign meditators get a single room.

What to bring: Insect repellent, water disinfectant, and medications should be brought in sufficient quantities from home. A light sleeping bag and a warm fleece jacket are particularly useful during the winter months. Bring your own pillow.

Items of daily use such as toiletries, flashlight, batteries, flip-flops, and water bottle can be bought in Yangon.

Food: Meals are nourishing, tasty, and varied and are prepared hygienically. Vegetarians will have no problem. Breakfast is at 5:30 a.m. and lunch at 10:30 a.m. Drinking water is filtered, but be cautious. If you want to be on the safe side, bring disinfectant.

Costs: Support of the center is exclusively by donations. Thus, the center is dependent on the voluntary support through participants.

Rules: Participants should dedicate at least 14 hours a day to formal practice (walking and sitting meditation) and limit other activities (e.g., laundry) to a minimum. Reading, writing (except taking notes), walks should be avoided. The eight silas (moral precepts) should be observed. Clothing should be comfortable, practical, and decent (no shorts or tank tops). Traditionally, white blouses and shirts are recommended. Men and women wear a brown longyi (sarong or wrap-around skirt) that can be obtained at the center.

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate. The cooler dry season from November to February are the best months. From March on very hot.

Medical care: Hygienic conditions are good by Burmese standards. Malaria risk is low. Medication is scarce and must be brought in sufficient amounts (antibiotics, Halfan, first-aid kit). A few times a week a doctor is present.

Immigration: Visa mandatory. Tourist visa is valid four weeks. If you want to enter with a meditation visa you must ask for a so-called sponsorship letter from the center which must be sent to the Burmese embassy together with the visa application. For processing, reckon on about three months. Visa extensions are also possible. Take sufficient passport pictures (about 10) for the various forms.

Note: Suitable for serious meditators with retreat experience desiring intensive practice. There are some interesting books at www.mahasi.com.

2.7 Mahasi Sasana Dhammaswamyi Yeiktha Meditation Center

by Samaneri Uppalavanna Theri

Address: Mahasi Sasana Dhammaswamyi Yeiktha Meditation Center
Sagaing Hills
Sagaing Division, Myanmar

Location: Very quietly situated on the hills of Sagaing in Central Burma. Forest setting.

How to get there: From Yangon take the direct night bus to Mandalay or Sagaing City. There is only one line. If there are no breakdowns, the trip takes about 16 hours and costs about US\$ 6.

The train is relatively expensive for foreigners (about US\$ 42). Burmese pay US\$ 3.60. Duration of trip is similar to bus. From Bangkok there is now a direkt flight to Mandalay, but it is rather more expensive than to Yangon. A flight from Yangon to Mandalay is about US\$ 110 and takes about 1 ½ hours. The airlines Air Mandalay and Yangon Airways are reliable.

Climate: Sagaing is in Central Burma and has rather extreme temperatures. The months March, April, May should be avoided at all costs because the temperatures climb up to 40 °C and more. From June it is monsoon; however, it is moderate. It lasts until about September. Best time is from mid-October until mid-February when it is cool and dry. Then a jacket is definitely needed in the evenings.

Lodging: Single or common quarters. Will be arranged at arrival.

Method: Vipassana meditation in the tradition of Mahasi Sayadaw.

Rules: Beginners are instructed while experienced yogis can sit by themselves in their quarters or in the meditation hall. Once daily there are Dhamma lectures by the Ven. U Sirinda. Eight silas are the basis. Other activities should be shunned and serious and disciplined practice is expected. There are no time limits, but you should stay at least 7 days.

Food: Breakfast and lunch (also vegetarian) are provided by the center and lay supporters. Food is simple, but healthy and abundant.

Medical care: Competent medical doctors in the nearby Ayudana Hospital. There is a pharmacy with a fair selection of basic drugs.

Costs: The center is supported exclusively by donations and is therefore dependent on the voluntary support of the visitors.

What to bring: Insect repellent, water disinfectant, and medications should be brought in sufficient quantities from at home. A sleeping bag and a warm fleece jacket are particularly useful during the winter months. Bring your own pillow. Items of daily use such as toiletries, flashlight, batteries, flip-flops, and water bottle can be bought in Sagaing City.

Note: The center is situated beautifully and quietly. It is not crowded because it is in the countryside (except for the Burmese New Year, which just about all Burmese spend in meditation centers). The Sayadaw is extremely nice and gracious, has plenty of metta and empathy. Peoples' helpfulness is unique, possibly because there are few foreigners. True inside information for those who want to avoid the large centers in and around Yangon.

2.8 Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, Yangon

by sister Ariya Nani

Address: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre
55A, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road
Mayangone P.O., Yangon 11061, Myanmar
Tel: 0095-1-661479, Fax: 0095-1-667050,
Internet: www.chanmyay.org
E-mail 1: chanmyay@mptmail.net.mm
E-mail 2: chanmyay@pacific.net.sg

Description: The Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre is by the main road to the airport. It was founded in 1977 by the Ven. Sayadaw U Janaka, one of the most notable disciples of Mahasi Sayadaw. He acted also as the translator for Mahasi Sayadaw on his trips to Europe and the U.S. The center consists of a number of buildings, amongst others a four-floor building for foreign meditators. On the four floors there are single rooms for women and men as well as separate meditation halls. The office to the right of the entrance is your first contact.

Spiritual guidance: Sayadaw U Janaka was born in 1928 and is still in good health. He speaks English very well. Since 1967 he has been a meditation teacher, first in the Mahasi center and from 1977 in his own center. Since 1981 he goes abroad twice yearly to teach meditation courses in various countries.

How to get there: A taxi from the airport is about US\$ 5, from the city center about US\$ 2. If you announce your arrival at the airport early enough (about 1 week ahead), you will be picked up.

Meditation technique: Based on Mahasi Sayadaws method of Vipassana meditation/insight meditation. Formal meditation is in turn sitting and walking; durations are adjusted according to individual level. Primary object of meditation is the rising and falling of the abdomen. Much value is placed on the development of a continuous and uninterrupted mindfulness in all activities of daily life, that is, all activities outside of formal meditation. Hence all movements during eating, dressing, getting up etc. are done consciously slowly in order to be mindful at any given moment.

Language(s): Individual interviews and lectures in English. Sayadaw U Janaka and another Sayadaw in charge of the foreigners speak English well.

Course duration and dates: Since there are no group retreats no dates need to be observed. You can join any time. Minimum stay is 10 days. For maximum, sky's the limit.

Lodging: Foreigners live in the new four-floor building. Clean single rooms are available. Common modern showers and toilets. Washing machine. Each room contains a bed and a table. Mattress, sheets, blanket, mosquito net and thermos are provided by the center.

What to bring: Insect repellent (Yangon is malaria-free), personal medication, warm sweater and socks for the cooler season (November to February), sitting pillow. Most articles of daily use (soap, toothpaste, flashlight, batteries) are available in Yangon.

Food: Two abundant meals daily. Breakfast is at 5:30 a.m. (full meal with fried rice or noodles and noodle soup as well as fruit, cake, coffee, tea) and lunch at 10:30 a.m. (rice with five to seven different curries, fruit, desserts). You can choose between vegetarian and nonvegetarian food. Evenings, fruit juice around 5 p.m. You can fill your thermos with hot water during mealtime. Clean, filtered drinking water is available.

Costs: The center is supported exclusively with donations.

Medical care: Medical doctors visit the center regularly to treat the meditators for free. Western and traditional Burmese drugs are available.

Rules and clothing: All meditators practice from 3:30 a.m. to at least 9:30 p.m. and must observe the eight silas. Temporary ordination is possible for women and men. During the retreat meditators keep noble silence and do not read and write (except short notes for the individual interviews). Walks outside the center are prohibited and the center is left only in emergencies. Therefore, you should provide for all contingencies ahead of time. E-mail and fax use is also only permitted in emergencies. Burmese yogi attire is recommended: white/light blouse or T-shirt and brown longyi (sarong) for women, white/light shirt or T-shirt and brown longyi for men. You can buy these things there easily and at a good price or borrow them from

the center.

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate. Best go in the cooler season from November to February.

Immigration: Visa mandatory. Tourist visa is valid for four weeks. If you want to enter with a meditation visa you must ask for a so-called sponsorship letter from the center which must be sent to the Burmese embassy together with the visa application. For processing, reckon on about three months. Visa extensions are also possible. Take sufficient passport pictures (about 10) for the various forms.

Note: Foreigners are treated very courteously.

Branch monasteries: Chanmyay Yeiktha (Forest Centre in Hmawbi)
Shansu, Hmawbi, Myanmar, Tel: 0095-1-620321

Chanmyay Yeiktha (Pyin Oo Lwin)
Toe Gyi Koun Village, near Anee Sakhann railway station
Pyin Oo Lwin, Myanmar, Tel: 0095-85-22457

Chanmyay Yeiktha (Hinthada)
Targlay Quarter, Hinthada, Myanmar, Tel: 0095-44-21838

Chanmyay Yeiktha (Lei Way), Lei Way Myo, Myanmar

abroad: Dhammodaya Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre
45/1 MU4 Tambol Tanon Krad, Ampur Muang
Nakon Pathon 73000, Thailand
Tel: 0066-1-8109632, E-mail: dhammodaya@hotmail.com

Sitalarama Vihara
Myanmar Buddhist Temple, 69 Martin Valley Road N.E
Calgary, AB T3J 4L9, Canada, Tel: 001-403-5687205

Dhammodaya Myanmar Vihara, 30 Mackay Drive,
Ashburton, Petermarizberg 3200, South Africa
Tel: 0027-33-3261463, E-mail: mabasa@iafrica.com

2.9 Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre, Hmawbi

by sister Ariya Nani

Address: Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre
Shansu, Hmawbi, Myanmar
Tel: 0095-1-620321
Internet: www.chanmyay.org

Description: The forest meditation centre is about 1 hour by car north of Yangon, outside the town of Hmawbi (road to Bagan). The grounds are spacious with many large and shady trees and fragrant shrubs. It is surrounded by typical Burmese quarters and villages. For quarters, there are kutis (bungalows with two rooms). There are several meditation halls as well as special meditation benches with roofs under the trees, so sitting and walking meditation can be practiced outdoors.

Spiritual guidance: Sayadaw U Janaka was born in 1928 and is still in good health. He speaks English very well. He has been a meditation teacher since 1967. First in the Mahasi Center and from 1977 in his own center. Since 1981 he goes abroad twice yearly to teach meditation courses in various countries.

How to get there: From Chanmyay-Yeiktha city center there are numerous opportunities to hitch a ride. A taxi from the city center is about US\$ 10, from the airport about US\$ 7. From the city center (Sule pagoda) there are also public direct busses. From the bus stop (Chanmyay Yeiktha Hmawbi) 10 minutes walk.

Meditation technique: Based on Mahasi Sayadaws method of Vipassana meditation/insight meditation. Formal meditation is in turn sitting and walking; durations are adjusted according to individual level. Primary object of meditation is the rising and falling of the abdomen. Much value is placed on the development of a continuous and uninterrupted mindfulness in all activities of daily life, that is, all activities outside of formal meditation. Hence all movements during eating, dressing, getting up etc. are done consciously slowly in order to be mindful at any given moment.

Language(s): During the vassa (three months during monsoon) Sayadaw U Janaka comes regularly to the forest center to conduct interviews with the foreigners. Apart from that, the individual interviews are usually translated. Ariya Nani (a Swiss nun)

translates from Burmese into English, German, or French. She is also available to meditators for instructions and individual interviews. Since she gives courses abroad, please ask when she is in Hmawbi. Ven. Nyanaramsi (Malaysian monk) also instructs and conducts individual interviews in English or Chinese.

Course duration and dates: Since there are no group retreats, no dates need to be observed. You can join any time. Minimum stay is 10 days. No maximum.

Lodging: Meditators live in kutis (bungalows) with two rooms each and shower/toilet. Each room contains a bed and a table. Mattress, sheets, blanket, mosquito net and thermos are provided by the center. All kutis have fine mesh windows against mosquitoes.

What to bring: Insect repellent (Hmawbi is malaria-free), personal medications, warm sweater and socks for the cooler season (November to February), sitting pillow.

Most items of daily use such as soap, toothpaste, flashlight, and batteries are available in Hmawbi.

Food: Two abundant meals daily. Breakfast is at 5:30 a.m. (full meal with fried rice or noodles and noodle soup as well as fruit, cake, coffee, tea) and lunch at 10:30 a.m. (rice with five to seven different curries, fruit, desserts). You can choose between vegetarian and nonvegetarian food. Evenings, fruit juice around 5 p.m. You can fill your thermos with hot water during mealtime. Clean, filtered drinking water is available.

Costs: The center is supported exclusively with donations.

Medical care: Medical doctors visit the center regularly to treat the meditators for free. Western and traditional Burmese drugs are available.

Rules and clothing: All meditators practice from 3:30 a.m. to at least 9:30 p.m. and must observe the eight silas. Temporary ordination is possible for women and men. During the retreat meditators keep noble silence and do not read and write (except short notes for the individual interviews). Walks outside the center are prohibited and the center is left only in emergencies. Therefore, you should provide for all contingencies ahead of time. E-mail and fax use is also only permitted in emergencies. Burmese yogi attire is recommended: white/light blouse or T-shirt and

brown longyi (sarong) for women, white/light shirt or T-shirt and brown longyi for men. You can buy these things there easily and at a good price or borrow them from the center.

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate, best during the cooler season.

Immigration: Visa mandatory. Tourist visa is valid four weeks. If you want to enter with a meditation visa, you must ask for a so-called sponsorship letter from the center which must be sent to the Burmese embassy together with the visa application. For processing, reckon on about three months. Visa extensions are also possible. Take sufficient passport pictures (about 10) for the various forms.

Note: Most foreigners prefer the quiet forest center to the noisier city center. Very suitable for beginners and long-term meditators. Foreigners are treated very warmly.

2.10 The-Pyu Tawya Vipassana Meditation Centre & Monastery

by Scott Donald Dez. 2005

Information: The monastery is 2 years old but developing quickly; presently 8 buildings constructed. In the north of Yangon, on a side road between the Haukkant Junction and Hmawbi. No telephone. Taxi takes about 1 hour from Yangon.

Contact person: Sithu Lwin-Travellers Media, (90) 2nd floor,
28th Street (Middle) Pabedan Township, Yangon
Tel.: 951-283911, Email: travellers@aseanmail.net

Teacher: Ashin Sayadaw U Panna Jota. Sayadaw does not speak English but one translator is usually living there.

Technique: 10 Day Retreats in the style of Goenka

2.11 Saddhamma Ransi Meditation Centre

by Dieter Baltruschat and Hilde Scheller using buddhanet.net

Adresse: Saddhamma Ransi Meditation Centre
7 Zeyar Khemar Road
Mayangone 7SHP, Yangon (Rangoon), Myanmar
written preregistration recommended!

Description: The Saddhamma Ransi Centre is a small but select center in a relatively quiet area a bit outside Yangon. It has a beautiful dhamma hall and several smaller buildings. Yogis are mainly Burmese.

Spiritual guidance: Ven. Sayadaw U Kundala is considered one of the most notable teachers in the tradition of Mahasi Sayadaw and for a while was head of the Mahasi Center. Sayadaw U Kundala has years of experience with Western practitioners and in Myanmar is called "Metta Sayadaw" because of his friendly attitude. Because he teaches a lot elsewhere, he is often absent from the center.

How to get there: From the city center in Yangon the Mahasi Center is reached in 10 min. by taxi. To the Saddhamma Ransi Meditation Centre pass the Mahasi Center, take Kaba-Aye Pagoda Road out of the city, pass Sayadaw U Janaka's Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre and continue down the main road. Hopefully the driver will find the correct road to turn (approx. 8 km). The entire trip is about 30 to 45 minutes.

Meditation technique and schedule: Observation of body, feelings, mind, and mind objects. Usually, primary object of contemplation during sitting meditation is rising and falling of the abdomen. Several times per week there is an interview with the meditation teacher. The center has a less stringent timetable than other centers of the Mahasi tradition. Instead of the usual minimal 12 hours of practice „only“ 8 are expected. A stay of one to three months is recommended.

Language(s): During the interviews a translator is present because the teachers speak little English.

Course duration and dates: Since there are no group retreats, there are no special dates to adhere to.

What to bring: Insect repellent, water disinfectant, and medication should be brought in sufficient quantities from at home. A light sleeping bag and a warm fleece jacket are useful during the winter months. Sitting pads are available, but a pillow for sitting should be brought. Items of daily use such as toiletries, flashlight, batteries, flip-flops, and water bottle can be bought in Yangon.

Costs: The center is supported exclusively with donations and is therefore dependent on the voluntary support of the visitors.

Rules: Participants commit themselves to the eight silas (moral precepts). Clothing should be decent and comfortable (no shorts or tank tops). Traditionally, white blouses and shirts are recommended. Men and women wear a longyi (sarong or wrap-around skirt) which can be obtained in Yangon.

Climate and best time to go: Tropical climate, the best time to go is the cooler dry season from November to February (from March very hot).

Immigration: Visa mandatory. Tourist visa is valid four weeks. If you want to enter with a meditation visa, you must ask for a so-called sponsorship letter from the center which must be sent to the Burmese embassy together with the visa application. For processing, reckon on about three months. Visa extensions are also possible. Take sufficient passport pictures (about 10) for the various forms.

Note: Because of the less stringent schedule and Sayadaw's friendly manner good for less experienced yogis interested in the Mahasi method.

In the center, there are some interesting and pragmatic books by Sayadaw U Kundala (e.g., "Dhamma Ratana").

2.12 Sîtagu International Buddhist Academy (Study center)

by Samaneri Uppalavanna Theri

Address: Sîtagu International Buddhist Academy
Sagaing Hills, Sagaing Division, Myanmar (Burma)
Tel: 0095-72-21611, Fax 0095-72-21611
E-mail: sitaguacademy@mptmail.net.mm

President: Sayadaw Dr. Nyanissara
Rector: Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalabhivamsa
Chancellor: Sayadaw Dr. Panditavarabhivamsa

Description: Sitagu is a Buddhist university which will be fully functioning on an international level from about 2005. At present, only Burmese students (or foreigners who speak Burmese). Non-Burmese interested in Theravada can on short notice talk to the head or rector on special lessons. Short stays are possible. Field and topics can be decided on individually with the teacher or lecturer; all parts of the Tipitaka are possible. Teaching is in English.

The large and architecturally pleasing university is situated in quiet and rural surroundings at the foot of the Sagaing hills. The hills have been known for 1000 years for their monastic variety and the pure practice of Theravada Buddhism. There are about 900 monasteries for monks and nuns. Some settings are foresty and archaic. Monks and nuns often live, study, and practice just as in the old days.

Location: Sagaing is in Central Burma about 20 km from Mandalay. The little town Sagaing has a large market at which everything necessary can be bought. The academy is in the hills about ½ hour walk from the town center. In the center there are no shops or apartments, but monasteries and ancient pagodas worth a visit. Everything can be reached by foot. Means of transport from town to the monasteries: horse-drawn coach.

Meditation: No retreats in the academy, but retreats can be arranged in the monasteries and centers around the academy (however, in most no English is spoken. Exception: Sagaing Mahasi Dhammaswamyi Yeiktha). Meditation without teacher is no problem at the academy; practice is possible in some rooms and your own quarter.

Subjects and courses: Pali, Sutta, Abhidhamma, Vinaya, Burmese. By demand,

courses can be individually arranged on short notice.

How to get there: From Yangon take the direct night bus to Mandalay or Sagaing city (there is only one line). Trip is about 16 h (without breakdowns!) and costs about US\$ 5.

The train is rather expensive for foreigners (around US\$ 35). Burmese pay only US\$ 3. Trip duration is comparable to bus. There is a direct flight now from Bangkok to Mandalay, but it is considerably more expensive than the flight to Yangon.

The flight from Yangon to Mandalay is about US\$ 90 and takes 1 ½ h. The airlines Air Mandalay and Yangon Airways are reliable and can be recommended.

Lodging: Visitors and those interested in individual studies are housed in first class A/C double rooms with separate living room and fridge, bath and toilet.

Food: Full board at the academy. If you are vegetarian, please notify at arrival. Clean drinking water is available everywhere for free.

Health: Hygienic conditions at the academy are very good. The potable water is treated and food is hygienically prepared. No risk of malaria. Insect repellent and a hat against sun are recommended.

Medical care: Ayudana Hospital opposite the academy, founded by Sayadaw Dr. Nyanissara. Treatment is free/by donation. It is very clean and doctors are competent. The medical director speaks English very well.

Costs: All social and educational institutions founded by the Ven. Sayadaw Dr. Nyanissara are based on the Buddhist principle of dana, i.e. everything is financed through voluntary donations of the generous Burmese. Foreign visitors and students can contribute in the same manner. Medication against malaria, typhoid, high blood pressure, diarrhea and dysentery are appreciated by the doctors of Ayudana Hospital.

Note: At present (until 2005) very suitable for short and individual studies, as well as long-term stays for individual studies. Very pleasant atmosphere, lovely setting in beautiful nature and historic sites. Much metta and helpfulness.

2.13 Dhammavijjalaya Centre for Buddhist Studies (Study center)

(under construction) by Samaneri Uppalavanna Theri

Address: Dhammavijjalaya Centre for Buddhist Studies
Mahasubodhayon Monastery
Sagaing Hills Road, Sagaing, Myanmar
Tel: 0095-72-21311

Head: Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalabhivamsa. The Ven. is an outstanding Pali and Abhidhamma scholar and excellent specialist on Tiptaka. He is considered a world specialist in the field of Buddhist studies.

Location: The center for Buddhist studies, which is currently under construction, is directly behind the monastery of the Ven. Dr. Nandamalabhivamsa in a very quiet setting, surrounded by pagodas and few monasteries.

Primary goal of the center is to offer foreigners a quiet spot for (individual) studies of Pali writings (Tipitaka) and the practice of the learned.

There will be simple but functional quarters with bath and toilet. The center is currently building up a library with a large spectrum of Buddhist literature for reference. On demand, Sayadaw Dr. Nandamalabhivamsa will organise lessons in Suttas, Pali, Abhidhamma and adjoining commentaries.

The center will also support research for dissertations in the field of Buddhist studies. Those interested can call Sayadaw directly (telephone see above).

The second goal of the center is to publish essential summaries of Suttas or individual aspects of the Dhamma as brochures in several languages and make it available to Buddhist groups in the West. This includes the translation of known texts on demand.

Subjects: Abhidhamma, Pali, Suttas, the entire spectrum of Buddhist studies.

Courses: Anytime depending on demand.

Location: 10 minutes from town center (Sagaing) and the shopping district. Around the center, which is quietly situated between three other monasteries, there are many pagodas. The center is very green with fruit trees and organic vegetable subsistence farming.

How to get there: From Yangon take the direct night bus to Mandalay or Sagaing city (there is only one line). Trip is about 16 h (without breakdowns!) and costs about US\$ 5.

The train is rather expensive for foreigners (around US\$ 35). Burmese pay only US\$ 3. Trip duration is comparable to bus. There is a direct flight now from Bangkok to Mandalay, but it is considerably more expensive than the flight to Yangon.

The flight from Yangon to Mandalay is about US\$ 110 and takes 1 ½ h. The airlines Air Mandalay and Yangon Airways are reliable and can be recommended.

Climate: Sagaing in Central Burma has rather extreme temperatures. March, April and May are not recommended because temperatures can be 40 °C and higher. From June, it is monsoon. However, it is moderate. It lasts until about September. Best time to go, when it is dry and cool, is between mid-October and mid-February. Then you will definitely need a jacket in the evenings.

Lodging: Quarters can be built only after sufficient financial support has been raised. There are plans for a building with single rooms (including bath and toilet) on the ground floor and a hall for lessons and lectures above. Currently lodging can be arranged on demand.

There are also plans for very beautiful bamboo huts for students who want to stay longer and live in a meditative and monastic atmosphere.

Food: None as yet. The plan is to provide simple vegetarian meals and evenings, self-catering.

Medical care: Through Ayudana hospital in the Sagaing hills (see Sitagu Intl. Buddhist Academy).

Costs: The center is founded and run exclusively on the Dana principle. If you wish to support the project financially and perhaps want to give cash, finance a telephone line, a bamboo hut, or donate in other ways, please contact Theravada AG, E-mail: theravada@dharma.de. Buddhist books (preferably in English) or original texts (in Pali, Latin script) are also very much appreciated.

3. Sri Lanka

Ven. Mettavihari Thera

Narada Buddhist Center, 380/9 Sarana Road, 10700 Colombo.

Can help answer questions (E-mail: metta@metta.lk)

Internet has more informations, amongst others a list with additional meditation centers and study possibilities:

www.metta.lk/temples/meditation-centers.html

Buddhist Publication Society (BPS)

54, Sangharaja Mawatha, P.O. Box 61, Kandy, Sri Lanka

Tel. 94-(0)81-2237283, 2238901 Fax: 2223679

E-Mail bps@sltnet.lk Internet: www.bps.lk

BPS Bookshop opening hours: Mo-Fr 9.00-16.30, Sa 9.00-12.30

Worth a visit. By the road around the artificial lake in Kandy. Aside from a large selections of books (some in German) you can get the latest informations on retreats and meditation in Sri Lanka.

You can also obtain a highly recommended catalogue for books there.

3.1 Nilambe

source: buddhanet.net, Samanera S. and Helge Latzina 2004

Address: Nilambe Meditation Centre
Galaha Road, Kandy, Sri Lanka
E-mail: upulnilambe@yahoo.com

Location: Nilambe was founded by laypersons for laypersons, is one of the best known centers in Sri Lanka and is beautifully situated in a famous tea plantation area about 30 km south of Kandy. It is well-known for its pleasant and friendly atmosphere.

How to get there: From Kandy take the bus to Galaha to Nilambe Office Junction. Then continue on the main path towards the peak. Walk takes about 45 minutes. In dry weather, you can also use the stairs through the tea plantation (follow white arrows). Taxi or Three-Wheeler from Kandy 700-800 Rs.

Teacher and tradition: Upul Gamage, Theravada, Vipassana meditation.

Language(s): English and Sinhalese.

Course duration and dates: Individual guidance, hence no particular dates. In December/January and April/May, the centre may be full.

Rules and daily schedule: The day begins at 5 a.m. with a sitting period. After that yoga, breakfast and working meditation. Then sitting and walking alternately until lunch. Afternoons, sitting and walking, yoga and a chanting period (reciting). Evenings, a snack and a Dhamma discussion. Breaks for walks in beautiful landscape.

Lodging and food: For men and women simple single and double kutis (bungalows). A sleeping bag is very useful. Food is vegetarian and can be very hot. If you want to be on the safe side regarding the potable water, bring disinfectant.

Costs: Meals and lodging are 400 rupees per day (exchange rate 2004: 1 US = approx. 120 rupees).

Climate: Very pleasant, sometimes cool (bring sweater/sleeping bag).

Note: Good conditions and well suited for beginners. Small library. For an extended stay, you will be supported in the visa application process. Since there is no electricity, bring sufficient supply of spare batteries for torch (we recommend the use of LED-torches – they are much more economic). During and after rain there are plenty of leeches, so bring Autan against these and the few mosquitoes.

3.2 Lewella Meditation Centre

source: buddhanet.net and Samanera S.

Address: Lewella Meditation Centre
160 Dharmashoka Mawatha, 20000 Kandy, Sri Lanka
Tel./Fax: 0094-81-2040937, E-mail: upulnilambe@yahoo.com
Internet: www.buddhanet-de.net/lewella/

Location and how to get there: The Meditation Centre is a branch of Nilambe at the outskirts of Kandy. It borders the Udawattakele Natural Forest Reserve. It is in walking distance from the Buddhist Publication Society. From the city center you walk 45 minutes or ride a bus (4.50 Rs) or threewheeler (80 Rs) (both 10 minutes). The main building houses a library, a meditation hall, and a yoga practice hall. A little noise from the road can be heard. Male practitioners of all Buddhist meditation traditions are accepted. For women, there is the similar Visakha Meditation Centre in Kandy.

Lodging and food: Four small bungalows in beautiful surroundings with electricity, water and toilet. The two daily meals (rice and curry) are vegetarian, very good, and of adequate size. If you want to be on the safe side regarding the potable water, bring disinfectant or filter.

Language(s): English and Sinhalese.

Course schedule and dates: Very well suited for self-retreats. On demand, teachers offer instructions and support. Mahesha Kodikara's yoga lessons are highly spoken of. Practitioners can combine meditation, studies, and physical exercises individually. No special dates to be observed. However, high season runs from mid-December to mid-February, so preregistration is recommended.

Costs: Meals and lodging are approx. US\$ 3 per day.

3.3 Dhammakuta

source: buddhanet.net and Samanera S.

Address: Dhammakuta-Vipassana Meditation Centre
Mowbray Galaha Road, Hindagala (near Kandy), Peradeniya
Tel: 0094-81-2234649
information also through BPS Kandy, Sangharaja Mawatha (Kandy Lake)

Tradition: Vipassana according to U Ba Khin (Burma), S.N. Goenka Center.

Course duration and dates: Throughout the year, 3-, 10-, and 21-day courses are offered. For beginners, a 10-day course is recommended. Timely preregistration is necessary. Timetable and application form can be ordered; you can also apply personally.

How to get there: Train from Colombo to Sarasavi Uyana Peradeniya station. From there walk to Galaha Road (shortcut through the university campus), then take the bus from Galaha Road to Mahakanda Junction.

Focus: Silent retreats with intensive sitting meditation and a daily lecture.

Meditation technique and schedule: First three days Anapanasati, i.e. observation of breath. Concentrating on inhaling and exhaling. Breath is only observed, not manipulated. From day three, Vipassana meditation in the tradition of U Ba Khin. In the "step by step" or "body-sweeping" method the bodily sensations are systematically observed. When the body is scanned from head to toe, another round is performed in the opposite direction. Sensations are not judged but only observed. The course ends with an exercise for the development of loving kindness.

Teacher and guidance: After 14 years of practice, his teacher U Ba Khin gave S.N. Goenka teaching permission in 1969. Goenkaj stems from a wealthy Indian industrial family and grew up in Burma where he was raised in the Hindu tradition. Today he lives in India. Since there are more than 50 centers world-wide which adhere to this tradition, Goenkaj's instructions are presented on video or audio tape.

Language(s): Burmese and English.

Food: Vegetarian. If you want to be sure about water potability, bring own disinfectant.

Language(s): Singhalese and English.

Cost: Donation.

Rules: All participants commit themselves to stay for the entire retreat, to adhere to schedule, to keep silence, not to read and write. Sexual activities are to be discontinued for the duration of the retreat and the five or eight (old students) silas (moral practice precepts) to be adhered to. Clothes should be comfortable, white and decent (no shorts and tank tops).

Climate: Pleasant.

Note: Well suited for serious practitioners with retreat experience, desiring intensive practice. Also suited for beginners who have no particular problem sitting for long periods of time and who are ready to submit to an intensive and stringent daily schedule.

3.4 Lanka Vipassana Centre

source: buddhanet.net and Samanera S.

Address: Lanka Vipassana Bhavana Centre
108 Vijerama Mawatha, Colombo 00700, Sri Lanka
Tel: 0094-11-2694100

Description and tradition: The center is in Colombo and accepts men and women interested in intensive Vipassana meditation according to Mahasi Sayadaw.

Meditation technique: The development of constant mindfulness (no breaks) is valued highly in this Vipassana method according to Mahasi Sayadaw. During formal meditation alternation is between one hour sitting and one hour walking. Outside formal meditation mindfulness is directed towards the task of the moment: eating, walking, laundry etc. The primary object of meditation during sitting is usually the rising and lowering of the abdomen. Several times per week there is an interview with the teacher.

Lodging: Part of a building with single rooms and shared baths. Women live in a separate area.

Costs: Donation.

Recommended reading:

Sayadaw U Pandita: "In this Very Life"

Mahasi Sayadaw: "Practical Insight Meditation – Basic and Progressive Stages", Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka

The Mahasi Center's homepage (www.mahasi.com) has additional recommended books to download.

3.5 Island Hermitage (Polgasduwa)

source: leaflet and Samanera S. updated from Erik Hausstädtler July 2005

Address: Island Hermitage (Polgasduwa)
To the Monk in Charge
80250 Dodanduwa, Galle District, Sri Lanka
Tel: Tel.: 0094 91 54 52 453
Informations: www.metta.lk/temples/ih/Info.htm

Registration: To preserve the tranquil and secluded character of the center is mandatory to apply and wait for an invitation. Only with this invitation the boat will take you there!

Ven. Mettavihari Thera of the Narada Buddhist Center, 380/9 Sarana Road, 10700 Colombo may help (E-mail: metta@metta.lk).

Description: The Island Hermitage is a monk hermitage in the Theravada forest tradition. It was founded in 1911 by the first German monk, Ven. Nyanatiloka. Polgasduwa is about 104 km from Colombo and about 5 km south of the seaside resort of Hikkaduwa.

Seriously interested males can pursue Buddhist studies or meditation techniques of the Theravada tradition. Excellent library (German and English books) and good atmosphere for practice. Sanitary areas are a bit run down.

How to get there: From Colombo take bus or train direction of Galle and get off in Dodanduwa. From there, walk to the laguna or take a threewheeler for the short way.

Lodging: Double kutis (sufficient space in between).

Costs: Donation.

Climate: Humid and hot.

What to bring: For overnight stays, bring passport with valid visa, alarm clock, flashlight with spare batteries, umbrella, insect repellent, sheet cover and blanket or a light sleeping bag. White upasaka clothing (white shirt and white sarong or trousers).

3.6 Vipassana Bhavana Madhyasthana

source: buddhanet.net and Samanera S.

Address: Vipassana Bhavana Madhyasthana
Dikhena Estate, 10320 Polgasovita
preregistration recommended (the German nun Sister Samadhi may help)

Description: The center is in the lowlands next to a coconut plantation and relatively densely built (little run-about space). Men and women are accepted. The daily schedule is very stringently organized and the eight silas are to be kept. Climate is humid and hot.

How to get there: From Colombo take bus No 120 direction Horana. In Polgasovita get off at gas station and walk that road down to the center (10 minutes) or take a threewheeler.

Tradition: Theravada, branch of "Galduva" (Ramañña-Nikaya) monastery.

Meditation method: Pa-Auk system, but on demand individual practice is possible.

Language(s): English or Singhalese.

Course of retreat and dates: Since guidance is individual, no particular dates needs to be observed.

Lodging and food: Laymen sleep in a sort of dormitory, women in kutis in a separate area.

Breakfast and lunch are vegetarian (rice + curries). To be on the safe side with potable water, bring disinfectant or filter.

Costs: Donation.

Recommended reading: An excellent book by Pa-Auk Sayadaw, "The Light of Wisdom", can be had free of charge at Ng Wee Kang, 791-C, Tmn Kerjasama, Bkt Beruang, 75450 Melaka, Malaysia, or at: knowing_seeing@yahoo.com. Kindly add an adequate amount for shipping as a donation.

3.7 University Forest Solitude

source: Samanera S.

Address: University Forest Solitude
77 Bowalawatta, 20000 Kandy, Sri Lanka
preregistration or personal application recommended!

Tradition: Amarapura group of Theravada forest tradition.

Decription and how to get there: The spotless monastery is situated nicely above Kandy and accepts only males. Library. Few mosquitoes, leeches in tolerable amounts after rain. Take Bowalawatta-bus from the Clock-Tower bus station to "La Kandyan" Hotel, then pleasant 15 minutes walk through a tea plantation.

Meditation technique: Different methods from the Theravada tradition (mainly Mahasi or Pa-Auk methods).

Daily schedule: Participating in daily routine (sweeping, breakfast, lunch, evening chanting and meditation) is mandatory.

Teacher: Ven. Sanathavihari (speaks excellent English).

Language(s): English or Singhalese.

Lodging: Kutis (electricity and water).

Food: Almost luxurious. Meals with the monks. To be on the safe side with potable water (spring water), bring disinfectant.

Costs: Donation.

Climate: Pleasant, sometimes cool.

What to bring: Alarm clock, flashlight with spare bulbs, umbrella, and insect repellent. Sleeping bag is a good idea. White upasaka clothing (white shirt and white sarong or trousers) mandatory.

3.8 Nissarana Vanaya

by Samanera Analayo

Address: Nissarana Vanaya
Meethirigalla 11742, Sri Lanka
only males
written preregistration mandatory!

Location: Nissarana Vanaya is of the Galduva tradition and is considered “the” meditation monastery in forest tradition history. Even today it functions well. At this point, three foreign monks live there, one of them German (Ven. Dhammaramita).

Teacher and tradition: Ven. Dhammajiva Bhikkhu was trained by Sayadaw U Pandita to be teacher. Vipassana meditation in the Mahasi tradition.

Language(s): English and Sinhalese.

Course duration and dates: Individual guidance, hence no particular dates to be observed. Intensive meditation practice.

Lodging: Single kutis (bungalows), males only.

Food: Vegetarian .

Costs: Donation.

Climate: Humid.

What to bring: Flashlight, insect repellent, white clothing.

3.9 Meditation Centre Kanduboda

by Samanera Analayo; internet, leaflet

Address: Meditation Centre Kanduboda, Delgoda, Sri Lanka
Tel/fax: 0094-11-2570306, E-mail: kandubod@sltnet.lk
Internet: www.metta.lk/temples/kandubodha/

written preregistration recommended but not necessary

Location and how to get there: The international center for meditation was founded in 1956 with the support of the Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw. It is about 30 km east of Colombo. Up to 70 meditators can be accommodated. For many years, Western monks, nuns, laymen and -women have come here. The center is near the road and surrounded by coconut plantations. There are a number of branch monasteries spread over Sri Lanka.

How to get there: From the central bus stand in Colombo between 1 and 1 ½ hours by bus No 224 (Colombo/Pugoda) to Kanduboda. The route from Katunayake International Airport is longer; there is no direct bus connection. It takes about 1 hour by taxi from the airport to Kanduboda. The tourist information at the airport or in Colombo can name the approximate cost of the fare.

Teacher and Tradition: Ven. M. Upali Thera. Intensive Vipassana meditation in the Mahasi tradition.

Meditation technique: Observation of body, feeling, mind, and mind objects. Primary object of meditation during sitting is rising and falling of the abdomen. Several times per week there is an interview with the meditation teacher.

Language(s): English and Sinhalese. Often translation into German is possible.

Dates and rules: Individual instructions, hence no special dates need to be observed. Stays from a few days to several weeks are possible. Laypersons live according to the eight rules of virtue and are asked to wear only white clothing.

Lodging: Single rooms are available for all meditators. Men and women live in

separate quarters. Monks live in a large house with rooms and several kutis (bungalows).

Food: Mornings and noons nourishing vegetarian meals. At other times, coconut milk, rice soup, and tea.

Costs: Lodging, food, and services are offered for free according to Buddhist tradition. This has been possible throughout the years because of the support through laypersons and donators from Sri Lanka and other countries. Donations are received gratefully.

What to bring: Please bring passport with valid visa, hygiene articles, flip-flops, alarm clock, flashlight, umbrella, writing pad and pen, insect repellent, and possibly light sleeping bag. Also bring two to three sets of white upasaka clothing (white shirt, white sarong or trousers)

Note: For longer stays, support in obtaining visa is possible.

Reading recommendation for beginners:

The Buddha and His Teaching – Ven. Narada

What the Buddha Taught – Ven. Walpola Rahula

The Dhammapada – Ven. Narada

The Satipatthana Vipassana Meditation – Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw

Further recommendations for reading:

The Path of Purification – Ven. Buddhagosa

A comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma – Bhikkhu Bodhi

An Introduction to Theravada Abhidhamma – Prof. G.D. Sumanapala

In This Very Life – Ven. U Pandita

3. 10 Rockhill Hermitage and International Retreat Centre

by Metaji in Jan. 2006

Address: Rockhill Hermitage, Wegirikanda, Via Gampola, Sri Lanka
Website www.rockhillsrilanka.net
Phone 0094-60-2 801 871

Description: Rockhill Hermitage is easily accessible from Kandy, located deep within the untroubled countryside of Sri Lanka's central mountain region. The climate is mild and pleasant. Visitors are surrounded by an abundance of flora and fauna with natural spring water on site.

The Hermitage is situated on a mountainside and consists of a monastery, a men's area, a nunnery and a women's area. It has a large meditation hall.

A library and a number of caves and student houses are scattered throughout the peaceful 15-acre grounds. The name "Rockhill" refers to the impressive boulders and rocks which form some of the caves.

The Rockhill Hermitage is one of the few retreat centers in Sri Lanka where it is possible for women to live alone in small cottages within natural surroundings. Intensive meditation courses are held for ten days at the beginning of every month. Arrangements can also be made for individual retreats of indefinite periods. The founder and teacher, Venerable P. Kassapa (Bhante) has been teaching Vipassana Meditation and the Dhamma for more than 35 years. He teaches in English.

Ten day Vipassana retreats are held on the first ten days of each month. Attendees are welcome to stay for individual practice after the retreat concludes.

How to get there: From Kandy, cross the railway line near the station to the local bus stops. Ask for a Wegiriya bound bus and exit at Wegiriya. Refer to the sign for Rockhill Hermitage (Wegirikanda) a 10 min. uphill walk. Alternatively, catch a Gampola bound bus to Gelioya. From the bus station at Gelioya catch a three - wheeler (tuk-tuk) to Rockhill Hermitage in Werigikanda (price Rs100). Buses cost under Rs10. You could also catch a minivan directly from Kandy. Alternatively you can catch a taxi direct from Kandy. Refer to the website for a map.

Tradition: Theravada

Meditation technique: The main practice taught here is the Vipassana Meditation.

Students who enroll for a ten day training course will spend the first three days learning to concentrate the mind by observing the inhalation and exhalation of the breath (Anapanasati) and the consequent sensation arising. For the remaining seven days they are then shown how to penetrate their physical and mental structure, developing a profound understanding of themselves and each other. Each day's progress is explained more fully by an hour's evening discourse. Experience has shown that within a ten day period the meditation technique can be grasped and the mind can achieve a degree of concentration and subtlety. A structured timetable and strict adherence to a few straightforward but very important rules is essential.

Teacher and guidance: The founder and teacher, Venerable P. Kassapa (Bhante) has been teaching Vipassana Meditation and the Dhamma for more than 35 years.

Language(s): Teachings are in English.

Course duration and dates: A 10-day retreat starts every first day of the month (ends the morning of the 11th). Retreatants are able to continue their stay for individual practice after the retreat.

Accommodation: Comfortable kutis (cottages) and some caves are available. There is separate accommodation for men and women. Simple, basic, shared accommodation is provided. Cold water showers are available inside; on hot, sunny days warm water may be available for bathing outside. Please remember Rockhill is a Hermitage (monastery and nunnery). Students are asked to wear bathing clothes when washing outside.

Shopping: Shopping is limited to emergencies. Students should bring everything they need with them including toilet goods, washing powder etc.

Food: Good quality vegetarian food is provided for breakfast and lunch. No solid food is taken after midday. The only exception is for students requiring an evening meal for medical reasons, for whom soup will be provided. Any student who is required to follow a special diet for medical purposes should consult the management before enrolling.

Cost: Meditators are requested to contribute a reasonable amount for food and lodging. A minimum amount of US \$5 a day is payable. Any special donations for improvement of the Hermitage are entirely on a voluntary basis. All donations gratefully accepted. **Payment on arrival, in cash, at the office please.**

Rules: Limited accommodation may mean that students will be sharing rooms. Restricted space and the close proximity of other people requires that Yoga or other forms of physical exercise such as Tai Chi, etc. is not practiced out of consideration for fellow students. A high standard of personal cleanliness is essential and we recommend that loose, comfortable white clothing be worn. Please ensure that your choice of dress is simple, modest and covers you properly. Shorts and short skirts are not permitted.

NOBLE SILENCE: Continuity of the practice both within meditation hours and in leisure time is of primary importance. To facilitate this training of the impartial observation of the phenomena of mind and matter, the major part of the course will be held in noble silence. Further details will be given by the management on enrolment in the course.

It is to gain a good grasp of the practice and gain benefit. The emphasis during the ten days is on **WORK**. A golden rule is to work as if one was alone on the course, ignoring any distractions and inconveniences encountered, with one's mind turned totally inwards. We request that each student read the above rules carefully and only apply to enroll for a course if they are fully prepared to submit to the discipline.

Daily schedule:

The timetable outlined below, if followed meticulously, will enable the student to develop a sharp and concentrated mind, the tool for his work. It should be stressed again, however, that it is the continuity of the practice and this alone that enables one to penetrate the subtle layers of mind and matter and start the process of loosening and unraveling the congestion of stress and emotion, which is a common source of suffering and unhappiness.

THE TIMETABLE

5:45am	Wake up bell
6:00am - 7:00am	Meditate in own place or in the Hall
7:00am - 8:00am	Breakfast in the nunnery
8:00am - 9:00am	Group meditation in the Hall
9:00am - 11:00am	Meditate in the Hall or in own place, sitting or walking.

11:00am - 11:30am Bell for Buddha Puja, get ready for lunch (Dana)

11:30am - 12:00pm Dana (mid-day meal) in the nunnery. **Please be on time**

12:00pm - 1:00pm Rest, study, attend to personal needs

1:00pm - 2:00pm Walking meditation

2:00pm - 3:00pm Group meditation in the Hall

3:00pm - 3:30pm Tea break in the nunnery

3:30pm - 5:00pm Private interviews in office. Meditate individually

5:00pm - 6:00pm Group meditation in the Hall

6:00pm - 7:00pm Free time

7:00pm - 7:30pm Tea break in the nunnery

7:30pm - 9:30pm Teacher's discourse, group discussion, group meditation

9:30pm Retire to own room

Please be on time and try to be mindfully aware of every movement you do.

If possible one should enroll in advance by post, telephone, email or a personal visit. As meals are taken only twice a day, at 7:00am and 11:30am, students are requested to arrive after lunch or to bring some food (fruits, etc) along. Office hours 9-10 am and 3-5 pm. Refer to our website for more details: www.rockhillsrilanka.net

4. Nepal

Some years ago travelling within Nepal was absolutely safe and easy. At the moment the situation in the country is a bit difficult from the point of view of domestic policy. But in March 2005 two travellers evaluated the situation in Kathmandu as being safe.

Travelling by public busses may be very strenuous. Most Nepalis are very friendly and obtaining a visa is simple. Medical care, however, is not up to Western standards. Hygienic conditions are a bit better than in India, but regarding food and potable water you should strictly adhere to the usual precautions applicable to travel in the Far East. The country's cuisine is considered rather simple and little varied, but tasty.

In the Buddha's country of birth there are a number of outstanding meditation teachers and some monasteries and centers with very good conditions for practice. The range of retreat options is very wide. Beginners can find several meditation courses, but there are also study centers for Buddhist scholarship and possibilities for long-term retreats. Aside from some interesting locations for Vipassana meditation Nepal is especially interesting for students and practicants of the Tibetan traditions. Particularly around the Great Stupa of Bodnath monasteries of nearly all Tibetan traditions can be found.

We recommend the English travel guide „Nepal – A Travel Survival Kit“, published by Lonely Planet Verlag.

Entry: A visa is needed for entering Nepal. You can obtain it quickly and easily at Nepalese consulates or at the airport in Kathmandu (bring passport pictures). Tourist visas can be extended in Kathmandu or Pokhara.

The cheapest visa for a single entry and stay for up to 60 days is 40 Euro in Europe or 35 US\$ in Kathmandu (2002). An extension can be obtained easily (1 US\$/day, up to 4 month per calendar year).

Up to date information on visas for Nepal are available on H.M. Ministry of Home's Department of Immigration website www.immi.gov.np

Airport Tax: The Airport tax on exit is presently Rs. 1700 to all foreign destinations.

4.1 Nepal Vipassana Centre

(Dieter Baltruschat, last update November 2002)

Address: Nepal Vipassana Centre
Dhammashringa, Muhan Pokhari, Budhanilkanth, Kathmandu
Tel.: 00977-1-371655 oder 371007

Leaflet, questions and registration (preregistration recommended):

Nepal Vipassana Centre City Office
Jyoti Bhawan, Kantipath, P.O. Box: 133, Kathmandu/Nepal
Fax: 00977-1-224720, Tel.: 00977-1-225490 or 250581 or 223968
E-mail: rjyoti@jyotib.mos.com.np or nvc@htm.com.np
Internet: www.vri.dhamma.org

Opening hours: Sunday to Friday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Location: A bit outside Kathmandu at the foot of a hill, beautiful garden, easy to reach from Kathmandu (organised bus trip from information office in Kathmandu at 1 p.m.). The center can accomodate about 140 persons.

Tradition and focus: Vipassana according to U Ba Khin (Burma). Intensive sitting meditation and one lecture daily.

Meditation technique and schedule of retreat: The first three days Anapanasati, i.e. observation of breath. Concentrating on inhaling and exhaling. Breath is only observed, not manipulated. From day three, Vipassana meditation in the tradition of U Ba Khin. In the "step by step" or "body-sweeping" method the bodily sensations are systematically observed. After the body is scanned from head to toe, another round is performed in the opposite direction. Sensations are not judged but only observed. The course ends with an exercise for the development of loving kindness.

Course duration and dates. Two ten-day courses twice monthly, from day 1–12 and 14–25. The second course in the months April, August and December is a Satipatthana Sutta course for meditators who have already taken part in at least three introductory courses.

Teacher and guidance: After 14 years of practice, his teacher U Ba Khin gave S.N. Goenka teaching permission in 1969. Goenkaj is from a wealthy Indian industrial family and grew up in Burma where he was raised in the Hindu tradition. Today he lives in India. Since there are more than 50 centers worldwide which adhere to this tradition, Goenkaj's instructions are presented on video or audio tape. Usually two assistant teachers (male and female) are present. They can answer questions and assist with problems. Usually there is a twice daily opportunity to talk to them.

Language(s): Video and assistance teacher: Nepali, Hindi, English. Taped Dhamma talks (introduction in the teachings of the Buddha) are also offered in other languages (e.g. German).

Lodging: Differently sized rooms, depending on participant numbers. Rooms house two to eight people. Clean toilets and laundry facilities. With some luck, hot showers (solar heating). Beds (with mattress) with mosquito nets. Blankets are available, but a sleeping bag is recommended since nights can be cold.

Food: Vegetarian and tasty. Second helpings possible for breakfast and lunch. Every day fruit, delicious yoghurt, milk, and tea are served. The friendly assistants are helpful and eager to support meditators with dietary restrictions. Evenings, new meditators receive fruit and tea. Experienced meditators may have lemon water. Drinking water is filtered or boiled and therefore safe for occidentals (if you want to be on the absolutely safe side, bring disinfectant).

Medical care: Good by Indian subcontinent standards, because in Kathmandu there are fairly good private clinics. Malaria is not endemic in the Kathmandu valley and hygienic conditions at the Vipassana Centre are good.

Cost: Donations.

Rules: All participants pledge to take part in the entire retreat (no leaving the premises), to keep noble silence for the first nine days, not to read or write, engage in sexual activities, follow rituals, prayers, or other extraneous meditation techniques, to accept orders by the teacher and the management, and to keep the five (novices) or eight (experienced meditators) silas (moral precepts). Yoga or Tai Chi exercises are compatible with the method but must not be exercised during the course so as not to distract other participants. Walks during the breaks are possible in principle but due to the rather small size garden only short rounds with little variation are possible.

There is no explicit dress code but very distracting or indecent clothing must be avoided.

Shopping: In Kathmandu most items of daily use can be obtained. In the centre there is no shop. Toiletries must be brought. Sitting pads are available, a pillow may be brought. A sleeping bag is an asset. Absolutely take warm clothing (fleece), because during sitting meditation at 4 a.m. it can be very cold.

Climate and best time to go: October/November is considered the best time for a trip to Nepal, End of February to April the second best (true also for trekking). Summers are hot and wet. December and January are suitable, but very cold (no heating!).

Final note: Good for serious practitioners with retreat experience and the desire for intensive practise. Also suitable for beginners who have no problems with long periods of sitting and are willing to submit to an intensive and structured schedule. Dhamma talks are well made and didactic. The „body sweep“ method is one of the most widely spread exercises in Vipassana. Good conditions.

4.2 Panditarama Lumbini International Vipassana Meditation Centre

Source: Ursula Lechel and Flyer

Address: Panditarama Lumbini International Nepal Vipassana Centre
Lumbini Garden, Nepal
Tel.: 00977-71-580118, E-mail: info@panditarama-lumbini.info
Internet: www.Panditarama-Lumbini.info

Location: Panditarama Lumbini International Vipassana Meditation Centre was set up by the Venerable Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa of Myanmar in co-operation with the Venerable Sayadaw U Asabhacara, the meditation centre was inaugurated on February 7th, 1999. The centre operates under the guidance of the Ven. Sayadaw U Pandita. The centre offers a supportive, comfortable and peaceful setting for Dhamma students seeking practice.

How to get there: Lumbini is located 22 km west of Bhairahawa in the south of

Nepal, near the Indian frontier. The place is easily accessible by air or by bus via Bhairahawa; by air from Varanasi (India); by train and/or bus via Sonauli and Bhairahawa.

In Bhairahawa there is a domestic airport; flying time from Kathmandu is 45 minutes. There are several flights daily (at approx. US\$ 81), but delays or cancellations because of bad visibility are frequent. Especially during the winter season several days' thick mist is not exceptional.

Travelling to Lumbini by bus from Kathmandu takes about 10 hours and is very arduous. More comfortable is a taxi from Kathmandu to Lumbini. It costs about US\$ 65 and takes six to seven hours.

From India you can reach Lumbini by train to Gorakhpur, from there by bus via Sonauli.

Meditation method: Intensive Vipassana meditation in the tradition of the Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw of Myanmar. Alternating sitting meditation and formal walking meditation. Daily interviews and regular Dhamma talks in English, Burmese and German.

Resident teacher: Venerable Vivekananda, a German bhikkhu (monk), has trained with the Ven Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa of Myanmar for nine years. Ven. Vivekananda teaches meditation in English, Burmese and German. The centre is run by volunteers. All long-term dhamma practitioners, these volunteers do everything from building the monastery to planting the vegetables to cooking the food for the meditators.

Precepts: Lay meditators observe eight precepts and monks and nuns observe their respective monastic vows.

Accommodation: Dormitory-style accommodation. Individual meditation huts are planned.

Food: The Burmese/Nepalese food is rich, tasty and vegetarian. For breakfast muesli with yoghurt, fruit and bread are offered; for lunch you can choose from rice or noodles with several vegetables and tofu. For drinking coffee, tea, milk, Ovomaltine and germfree water are available.

Duration of retreats: Meditators may schedule their individual retreat from a few days up to three months.

Formal retreats: Two formal retreats are conducted per year in December and in February.

Daily schedule und co-operation: The day starts at 4 a.m. and ends at 10 p.m. Formal meditation alternates between of one hour sitting meditation and one hour walking meditation, respectively. Breakfast is served between 6 and 7 a.m., lunch break is from 11 to 12.30 a.m. In the evening there is a dhamma lecture and tea break. Nearly all the work which comes up in the meditation centre is done by volunteers. Meditators only have to contribute a small amount of help with cleaning the sanitary facilities.

What to bring: Insect repellent, water disinfectant and medicaments should be brought from home in sufficient quantity. A sleeping bag and a warm (fleece) jacket are very useful. During the winter months night temperatures can go down to 5 degrees centigrade; and on misty days the temperature may not exceed 15 degrees. As there is no heating system in the centre, you should bring enough warm and easy drying clothes. Furthermore an electric kettle and a small hot water bottle can be of great use. Mattresses, bed linen, mosquito nets and sitting mats are available, but a floor cushion and a lightweight woollen blanket should be brought.

Climate and best time to go: Subtropical climate with hot summers and cool dry winters. The most favourable months are November/December and February/March. January is with lowest temperatures of about 5 degrees the coldest month and from March the thermometer rises again to over 35 degrees.

Dana: For over 2500 years Buddhist monasteries and meditation centres have functioned on the principle of generosity (dana). While there are no set fees, your donation will be warmly accepted for the purpose of maintaining and further developing this meditation centre.

4.3 Rigpe Dorje Institute Pullahari Monastery (Tibetan Tradition)

Address: Rigpe Dorje Institute
Pullahari Monastery and Retreat Centre
P.O. Box 11015, Jagdol, Ward Kopan, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: +977 1 4498196 Fax: +977 1 4471112
E-mail: pullahari@jamgonkongtrul.org
Website: www.jamgonkongtrul.org

Location: The Rigpe Dorje Institute at Pullahari Monastery is situated in serene seclusion on the northern foothills of the Kathmandu valley, overlooking the holy Great Stupa of Boudhanath. Both the Institute and the Monastery are surrounded by beautiful gardens and one has a great view of the valley in all the four directions. In this wonderful place, the age-old traditions of study, prayers and contemplation go on in the monastery, side by side with teachings and meditation instructions and guidance to lay practitioners from all over the world. The environment of the Rigpe Dorje Institute is conducive to the pursuit of deeper understanding and appreciation of the Buddha dharma through study and practice. The wondrous stupa of the Third Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche pervades the whole place with loving warmth and blessings.

Tradition: Mahayana/Vajrayana, Karma Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Main emphasis: Teachings on Buddhist philosophy and classes in Tibetan language and scriptures. Meditation on Shamatha, Vipassana and Mahamudra.

Meditation technique: Meditation on Shamatha, Vipassana and Mahamudra in the Mahayana and Vajrayana tradition.

Spiritual head: His Eminence Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche. H.E. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is one of the lineage holders of His Holiness the Karmapa whose 17th incarnation is the Gyalwa Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorje.

Teachers and course guidance: Drupon Khenpo Lodro Namgyal, Khenpo Chokey Gyaltzen.

Language: English, Tibetan.

Duration of courses and dates: The retreat facilities at the Rigpe Dorje Institute are open throughout the year to engaged Buddhists for study and meditation. Interviews with lamas and qualified teachers in residence for guidance in study and practice can be arranged.

During the winter and spring seasons — from January to March – teachings and meditation programmes are offered, conducted by Drupon Khenpo Lodro Namgyal and other teachers. Classes on Tibetan language and Buddhist scriptures are also offered.

Winter Retreat Programme: 2 months, January and February;

Spring Retreat Programme: 2 to 3 weeks, March

The dates for the programmes can vary slightly. For detailed information please visit the website www.jamgonkongtrul.org

Accommodation: Single and double rooms, with private or common bathrooms, are available. Beddings and linens are provided. Students are advised to bring a torchlight, hot water flask, and in winter a warm sleeping bag and a hot water bottle. The meals are vegetarian. Drinking water is boiled and filtered.

Medical: Kathmandu has good medical and diagnostic facilities. Besides numerous clinics there are also private hospitals and Tibetan and Ayurvedic medical treatments available. The nearest medical facility to the Institute is the University Teaching Hospital, 30 minutes walk and 10 minutes by car away.

Rates (per day): Single Room US\$ 8, single room with attached bathroom US\$ 12, double room US\$ 12, double room with attached bathroom US\$ 20. The room rates include three vegetarian meals, morning and afternoon teas, beddings, linens and hot water showers from November to May.

Tibetan classes: For beginners and advanced. Minimum enrolment is 1 month.

Rates: US\$ 50 for one month, US\$ 100 for two months.

Registration fee for retreat programmes: US\$ 25 (non-refundable).

Note: The Rigpe Dorje Programme teachings in winter and spring are free, and personal offerings to the teachers and translators are encouraged.

Wire transfers, checks, traveler checks, and cash payments are accepted in Nepalese Rupees and in the major trading currencies.

Rules: Students are encouraged to be sensitive to the monastic environment at Pullahari Monastery, and respect and help maintain the environment of contemplation at the Rigpe Dorje Institute. Those who enroll at the annual Rigpe Dorje Winter Programme are required to attend all sessions of the main teachings and at least one language or scriptures class.

Useful information: Taxis to Pullahari from the airport: It is cheaper to get a taxi from the stands outside the arrival hall. A reasonable price is between Rs. 450 and Rs. 550. Taxis from Boudhanath: Available outside the main gate of the Boudhanath Stupa. The charge is Rs. 250. Pullahari is about 40 minutes from the airport and 30 minutes from Boudhanath.

Directions to Pullahari: Go from Boudhanath to Jorpati to the Gokarna Shiva Mandir (an old Hindu temple). Turn sharply left opposite the temple. You will see a pine forest before you. Travel along the road for about 15 minutes until you reach the Shree Jana Jagriti Lower Secondary School. Take another sharp turn left. You will be on the road up to Pullahari Monastery. The walk will take about an hour.

5. Further reading and links

Weir, Bill: A Guide to Buddhist Monasteries and Meditation Centres in Thailand, Bangkok 1991; <http://meditationthailand.tripod.com>

Update from Pataraporn Sirikanchana, Fourth Edition 2004 published and available at The World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB)

Cummings, Joe: The Meditation Tempels of Thailand: A Guide, Bangkok 1987

Lorie, Peter, und Foakes, Julie: The Buddhist Directory, London 1996

Coleman, Graham: Handbook of Tibetan Culture – A Guide to Tibetan Centres and Resources throughout the World, London 1993

Kornfield, Jack: Living Dharma – Teaching of Twelve Buddhist Masters

Wordwide addresses and informations: www.buddhanet.net

Interesting collection of books: www.buddhanet/ebooks_m.htm

Buddhist Publication Society: www.accesstoinight.org/lib/bps/index.html

Access to Insight: Readings in Theravada Buddhism: www.accesstoinight.org/

Ajahn Payutto: www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/9280/payutto.htm

Interesting collection of texts: www.buddhismtoday.com/index/meditation.htm

Ajahn Chah and Ajahn Sumedho: www.amaravati.fslife.co.uk/english/tch.html

Mahasi Sayadaw: www.mahasi.com

Pa Auk Sayadaw: www.paauk.org