

Guidelines for Living at the Rôkoan Hermitage

This hermitage arose to meet the needs of experienced practitioners in Kyoto. Practicing here is a precious chance to devote ourselves wholeheartedly and, whenever others are present, do what we can to support their practice while living together in harmony.

Each moment is precious. Zazen is the natural focus: several hours of concentrated sitting everyday (see sample schedule below). The short breaks in between the 50-minute zazen periods are to use the toilet, to quietly stretch in one of the front rooms, or do slow *kinhin*-walking meditation in the front room. Do not make tea, eat, or converse during these short breaks.

Attention and care should be constant – not just during zazen. Noble silence is an integral part of practice; be mindful when talking. Be mindful when eating and do so in moderation. Put sleeping futons away neatly and take out only at night. Clean up promptly and thoroughly after eating or tea breaks, regularly clean the premises, and give a thorough cleaning upon leaving.

Coordinate with others living at the hermitage concerning what they would like to eat. This way, shopping could be done ahead of time and meals could be conducted in silence. Eating at least one meal per day together is a way of actively supporting each other during your stay at the hermitage.

If you have any suggestions or concerns, please let Jeff know right away. Together we are creating this space for sustained practice.

Before making a commitment to come practice here, first digest Guest Book impressions from others who have come. They can be found here: <http://beingwithoutself.org/hermitage/>

And consider the following:

- Why do you want to practice at the Hermitage?
- Are you living a wholesome life in keeping with the practice? If you have any mental or physical concerns, inform us first.
- Are you doing zazen regularly? You should be accustomed to sitting several hour-long periods a day (50 minutes zazen, 10 minute break; 50 minutes zazen, 10 minute break, etc.) See sample schedule below.
- Are you able to financially support yourself during your time here, without being a burden on others? This includes round-trip airfare, health insurance, and daily living expenses. A *Dana*-donation of at least 100 Euros weekly in cash would be appreciated. Please place it in an envelope and offer it when arriving. Another offering may be made when you depart.
- Are you familiar with Japanese customs and culture? This includes bowing, the importance of silence, listening more than talking, etc.
- Can you speak at least a little Japanese? Learning some key phrases will be helpful.

Please give serious consideration to these questions. Bear in mind that the Hermitage is not a guesthouse; if you want to come to Japan as a tourist, look elsewhere. Nor is it a temple; it is more demanding than a temple, since it requires you to provide much of the discipline yourself. Before coming, you should already have participated in at least one of our retreats and/or lived at a genuine training monastery. Then you will be ready.

One-On-One

This is to clarify things and resolve doubts. It is not psychological counseling, but a precious opportunity to get to the very bottom of your self with another. Free and open to mutually discover truth, this is the original spirit of Zen Buddhist practice.

Keep your concern or response brief and to the point. No need to "tell your story." One-on-one is not for discussing practice so much as presenting, revealing where you actually are. If clarification is necessary, questions can be asked. Make best use of this precious opportunity. Jeff is here for you.

During zazen, Jeff will get up from his seat, then go to the one-on-one room (upstairs on the right). After a moment, the first person to his left will rise and go for one-on-one. When that person returns and bows at his seat, the next person will also bow, then go. If you don't feel you are ready, you may just bow and remain sitting, although you are encouraged to go anyway. You will see why.

In the one-on-one room it is only necessary to place hands in *gasshou* when you have taken a seat and are ready to begin, and again at the end of the one-on-one. It is not necessary to bow. If necessary, you may request one-on-one anytime Jeff is present during zazen: quietly rise from your seat, *gasshou* in front of him, he will *gasshou* to you, then follow him.

Jeff may initiate one-on-one with you. He will rise from his seat during zazen and *gasshou* in front of you; *gasshou* to him, then follow.

Sample Schedule

5:00 Wake up, wash up, breakfast, prepare for others to sit.

6:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

7:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

8:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

9:00 – 12:00 Exercise, walking, shopping, lunch, etc.

12:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

13:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

14:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

15:00 – 18:00 Exercise, walking, shopping, dinner, etc.

18:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

19:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

20:00 Fifty-minute zazen.

21:00 – Exercise, *yaza* (late-night free sitting), etc.