



## **Personal Retreat Cabin Handbook**

We are delighted that you are planning to attend a personal retreat here at Tara Mandala. Attached are the registration forms and informational packets for the retreat. Please read the following carefully before you send in your registration forms. Please keep this document for your reference.

### **About Tara Mandala**

Founded by Tsultrim Allione and David Petit in 1993, Tara Mandala was created to foster spiritual and ecological awareness. It is a place for those who wish to explore and stabilize profound states of meditation in short or extended retreats in hermitage cabins that offer panoramic views as well as solitude and sanctuary. We also offer group retreats in Buddhism and other innate wisdom traditions.

In a chaotic and stressful world, Tara Mandala offers refuge and renewal. The experience of retreat in nature brings the gift of peace to the individual and ultimately those practicing deep meditation in retreat affects the fabric of the world.

Tara Mandala was inspired by the vision of a Western retreat center that Tsultrim had while living in the Himalayas as a Buddhist nun in the early 1970's. She felt the need to create a space for the reemergence of the sacred feminine and for people to go deeply into meditative practice through long and short term retreat. Tsultrim believes that people reaching deep levels of meditative awareness have a profound effect on humanity.

While the West developed its advanced outer technology, the Tibetans were developing inner technology. Tara Mandala was established to foster the development of this inner wisdom for the benefit of all beings, much like retreat centers in Tibet.

Tara is a female Buddha of compassion who represents both profound meditative experience and active engagement in the world. Symbolically, the mandala is a kind of architecture of the awakened psyche. To experience the phenomenal world as an integrated mandala of compassion is Tara Mandala.

"If a person goes in search of a silent and tranquil place, and applies the practice, their qualities will without doubt become infinite. Someone who directs themselves in such a direction will accumulate a benefit far superior to that of the one who makes offerings to the Buddhas as numerous as sand of the river Ganges."

*-Moon Torch Sutra*

## **Retreat Cabin Overview**

Tara Mandala's retreat cabins provide a rare and precious opportunity to be completely secluded and alone. Here you are free to maintain intensive practice and connect with your innermost being. The retreat cabins have been created through the loving kindness, generosity, and hard labor of many people.

The cabins are clean and empty. There is no telephone and limited or no electricity. There is a single bed, wood heat, a water cache for washing, a fully equipped kitchen, a gas stove and a small solar shower bag. In addition, a pillow, meditation cushions and zabutan, extra blankets, toilet paper and paper towels, oil lanterns, altar space, and candles are provided. Remember that our facilities are rustic and cabins do not have an outhouse. Ratna cabin has limited solar electricity. If you have your own meditation cushion you may prefer to bring it.

You must provide your own food, bedding and practice materials. In winter, it is essential in the mountain climate to bring a warm sleeping bag and warm outdoor clothes. You may also want to bring cross-country skis or snowshoes in case of heavy snowfall, as well as for exploration of the land.

NO SMOKING, drugs or intoxicants are allowed at the cabin.

## **RESERVATIONS**

In order to register for a private retreat, please complete the registration form and return to Tara Mandala along with the required deposit to hold your space.

For retreats of less than one month in length, a deposit equal to half of your total retreat fee is due at the time of registration to hold your place. This deposit is refundable minus a \$25 fee more than one month before your retreat begins, and non-refundable after that time. The balance is due ten days before the start of your retreat.

For retreats of longer than one month in length, a deposit equal to 30% of your total retreat fee is due at the time of registration to hold your place. This deposit is refundable minus a \$25 fee more than two months before your retreat begins, and non-refundable after that time. The balance is due ten days before the start of your retreat.

## **ARRIVAL**

Check-in time is between 2:00 – 4:00 pm. The Tara Mandala Retreat Coordinator will greet you on your arrival, and escort you to the retreat cabin for orientation. The long dirt driveways that lead to the cabins require a vehicle with high clearance and four wheel drive; if you do not have such a vehicle, we will shuttle you to your cabin.

## PREPARATION

Preparation for a solitary retreat is essential. This can include mental, social and practical preparations. It is helpful to schedule a portion of the beginning and end of your retreat (depending on retreat length) for transition time. Because you are totally secluded, it is important to have everything you need before beginning. Let those close to you know you will be out of touch, but emergency messages can be delivered by Tara Mandala Staff. The following is a suggested list of what to bring and consider when planning your retreat.

### Suggested personal items:

- ❖ Layered clothing
- ❖ Rain and snow gear
- ❖ Bath towel and washcloth
- ❖ Practice Materials
- ❖ Bedding
- ❖ Extra candles (votive size)
- ❖ Incense
- ❖ Toiletries including biodegradable soap
- ❖ Sunscreen
- ❖ Pocket Knife
- ❖ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ❖ Journal
- ❖ Camera
- ❖ Boots and slippers
- ❖ Backpack
- ❖ Hat and sunglasses

### Food:

Please bring enough food to last you one week. If you are in the cabin for a week or less, you should not need shopping. If your retreat is longer than one week, a shopping schedule will be arranged when you arrive – generally we will pick up your shopping list on a Tuesday and bring your groceries in on a Thursday. You must bring cash to give to the support person. Please keep in mind that there is no refrigeration, only a small cooler. You must bring ice (we recommend two blocks of ice in the summer) if you need refrigeration – we will restock your ice supply on weekly shopping trips. Do not leave food outside because of animals.

### Suggested Food Items:

- ❖ Dried fruit
- ❖ Crackers
- ❖ Jam
- ❖ Spices
- ❖ Nut butter
- ❖ Cooking oil (coconut does not spoil)
- ❖ Pasta
- ❖ Granola
- ❖ Rice milk or soy milk (especially handy in snack pack size)
- ❖ Canned or condensed milk
- ❖ Whole grains (rice, quinoa)
- ❖ Honey, agave, or sugar
- ❖ Coffee and/or tea
- ❖ Nuts and seeds
- ❖ Canned beans and soups
- ❖ Dehydrated food
- ❖ Ice block(s) for cooler
- ❖ Long lasting fresh fruit and vegetables
- ❖ Butter or ghee(which doesn't spoil)

## **DURING YOUR RETREAT**

A support staff person will check in with you personally on the second or third day of your retreat. After that, written communication will be checked for once a week throughout your stay. If a meditation teacher is available and you would like a teacher to visit you, this may also be arranged. Once you are in the cabin, it is strongly requested that you do not leave the land, but maintain your retreat without visits to town or the office, except in an emergency. In the same way, in order to preserve the quality of silence, it is strongly requested that you do not use a cell phone, or play audio with the exception of practice materials you may be using. There is a first aid kit in the cabin.

### **Wood Heat**

If you're not familiar with fires, be sure to ask for instructions on how to keep the wood stove warm and safe. Wood, kindling and an axe will be provided. You can leave split wood for the next person if you wish.

### **Water**

Ratna and Karuna cabins have water cache systems. This water can be used for washing but not for drinking. Drinking water will be in the cabin when you arrive and can be refilled on weekly shopping runs. Tara Mandala provides filtered drinking water from the land, which nonetheless has a high mineral content. You may bring bottled water if you prefer.

The solar shower has directions written on it. Test the temperature before getting under it, as it can get very hot. Mostly, it's just invigoratingly cold!

### **Keep in Mind**

What to remember while on retreat:

- ❖ Keep garbage can firmly closed and indoors at all times;
- ❖ Do not leave food lying around outside (even scraps) to keep from encouraging rodents, bears, etc.;
- ❖ Do not leave shower bag hanging with water unless you are using it;
- ❖ Never leave candles unattended;
- ❖ Do not leave mattresses outside in case of sudden storms.

### **Small animals and insects**

Love them, they are sentient beings. The cabin is tight and little creatures can't get in. If by chance a bird, mouse, or squirrel does get in, just open the doors and windows. By dusk it is sure to find its way out; animals move towards light and fresh air in the evening. Insects (flies in particular) do this as well. Insects like wasps that you'd rather get rid of immediately, can be caught in a drinking glass against a window. Slide a piece of paper under the glass and carry it out, sending blessings as the creature flies off.

### **Snakes and other wild things like bears and mountain lions**

Remember, they will only engage with you if they feel threatened. They will not come into the cabin. Wear boots if you walk off the trail. If you're lucky enough to see one, don't go near a snake, or bear etc. Stand still, back off slowly and send it away with blessings.

Bears in particular have been more active in our area due to unusual weather patterns and a long drought. If a bear comes looking for food near your cabin, you can encourage it to leave by creating a loud noise such as an air horn or whistle, both of which are in the cabins. If you are hiking, it is a good idea to make noise by clapping or hollering, "Hey bear." If you do see a bear, back away slowly. Do not turn and run, as it can be perceived as threatening.

### **Emergencies**

In case of emergency, you may use the phone in the upstairs office of the main building to dial 911. Pagosa has EMT, ambulance and air lift services. The nearest fully equipped hospital is located in Durango, about a 90 minute drive from the cabin.

### **Mercy Regional Medical Center (Hospital)**

970-247-4311

1010 Three Springs Blvd.

Durango, CO 81301

Directions: Take Highway 160 West to Durango. After passing through Bayfield, but before downtown Durango, turn right onto Three Springs Blvd.

### **Pagosa Family Medicine**

970-731-4131

75 South Pagosa Boulevard

Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

Directions: Take Highway 160 West to S. Pagosa Blvd and turn left.

Dr. James Pruitt is available by appointment in Pagosa Springs for minor incidents during business hours: 8 am – 5 pm M-F. Minor emergencies can walk in if they first call to inform the office they are coming.

### **AS YOU DEPART**

Please review and complete the check-out form before you depart. You will receive this form when you arrive on the land. We welcome your comments and feedback on your retreat experience.

After you finish your retreat you may consider offering a donation to Tara Mandala for the continued maintenance of the retreat cabins and general support of our mission. Tara Mandala is a non-profit organization, and our lifeblood is the donations of those who are inspired to support us. Please also consider becoming a member of Tara Mandala by joining our Sustaining Sangha. For your monthly donation of any amount, you will receive Words of Wisdom, a weekly email of Tsultrim's favorite quotations from Wisdom Teachers. At \$30/month or more, you will receive discounts (10-15%) on all Tara Mandala sponsored retreats in the U.S. Details are available on our website at [TaraMandala.org/Sustaining\\_Sangha](http://TaraMandala.org/Sustaining_Sangha).



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