

Practice Period at Green Dragon Temple / Green Gulch Farm Zen Center

Information & Guidelines

The Schedule

Practice Period offers the opportunity to engage with traditional Zen monastic training, a cornerstone of which is commitment to the daily scheduled events, including: zendo events, meals, study, and work.

It is expected that your intention is to follow the schedule completely, notifying the Ino (head of the meditation hall) if you are sick or otherwise unable to attend an event.

The regular daily schedule for Practice Period students begins with two periods of sitting meditation starting at 5:00 am (wake-up at 4:25). After breakfast, all residents gather for work meeting, and work until noon service in the zendo. In the afternoon, Practice Period students work for one hour then have a break until study hall at 4:00 pm, followed by meditation, service, and dinner with the community. The evening schedule consists of either two periods of meditation, or a class, or lecture. The day ends at 9:00 pm.

In addition to the regular daily schedule, there is a half-day sitting once a week. Two one-day sittings and a seven-day sesshin (meditation intensive) are also part of each Practice Period at Green Gulch. There are a number of ceremonies, classes, lectures, and events that are also part of the practice period schedule and in which all members of the community are invited to participate.

Staying within Green Gulch

Participation in the Practice Period includes a commitment to remain within the Green Gulch valley for the full two months. Because of this, we ask that you carefully consider all the items you will need for the full duration of your stay, and to take care of any medical and dental appointments before arriving. It is expected that Practice Period participants would leave Green Gulch only in an emergency.

Similarly, although many Practice Period participants have family and friends living nearby, we ask that students view the Practice Period as a retreat. In this spirit, we ask that students invite friends and relatives to visit Green Gulch for day visits only. If there is some need for a visitor to remain overnight, we ask that students please discuss these plans with the Tanto.

Housing

Most Practice Period students live in dormitory-style rooms with one to two roommates and a shared bath in Cloud Hall. Cloud Hall is adjacent to the meditation hall, and thus you are asked to keep noise and activity to a minimum. It is expected that no music will be played in Cloud Hall. Students are not allowed to have overnight guests in Cloud Hall during Practice Period.

What to Bring

Please consider carefully what you will need for the time you will spend at Green Gulch, as space is limited. Please bring dark, loose-fitting clothes for the zendo (black sitting robes may also be worn), and shoes that slip on and off easily. You will also need clothes for work, including rain gear, should you be assigned work outside.

Please provide your own bedding (a sleeping bag is usually sufficient), pillowcase, towel, and toiletries.

For formal meals, you will need a set of oryoki (Zen eating bowls, utensils, and cloths). If you do not have a set, you may purchase one from Zen Center for \$55. Please contact the Ino as early as possible if you need to purchase a set.

Study

The daily Practice Period schedule includes a formal time for study. You are expected to study books related to Buddhism. Green Gulch's library is available for use, but you may also bring your own Buddhist-related texts. In the formal study hall it is traditional to wrap your texts in a sutra cover. Please bring a cloth for this purpose.

Practice Discussion and Formal Interviews

Formal interviews with Senior Dharma Teachers and Abbots are known as dokusan. These one-on-one meetings with the leader of the Practice Period are arranged through his/her attendant, and are part of the formal practice at Green Gulch.

In addition to dokusan, Practice Period students are also invited to meet with practice leaders with whom they can speak about issues related to practice, living in community, and any concerns and interests that arise over the course of the Practice Period. These meetings are optional and are initiated by the request of the practice period student. The practice leaders at Green Gulch are senior practitioners who have all served as Shuso (head student).

Food

All meals are vegetarian, usually with a vegan option. Most meals are served in a common dining room with the whole community. On Thursday and Saturday mornings, and during all one-day sittings and sesshin, the Practice Period students will eat formally in the zendo.

If you have special dietary needs, please include this information in your application. Once at Green Gulch, please discuss your specific concerns with the Tenzo (head of the kitchen), so that special arrangements can be made if necessary.

Computers

In the spirit of supporting the conditions most conducive for training, we ask that you do not bring or use personal computers at Green Gulch during the Practice Period. Necessary internet access is available on community student computers.

Use of Intoxicants

In accordance with the Buddhist precepts, use of illegal drugs and alcohol is not permitted at Green Gulch. Violation of this rule is grounds for students being asked to leave the Practice Period.

Relationships

Each practice place at Zen Center asks that students do not get involved in sexual relationships for the first six months of their practice at Zen Center. Senior students are, likewise, asked not to engage in sexual relationships with students who have not yet been at Zen Center for six months. Students are also asked not to begin any new sexual relationships during practice period.

If you are involved in a committed relationship either with someone outside of Green Gulch, or another Practice Period applicant, please include this information in your application. Students who come to Green Gulch as a couple are asked to be sensitive about public displays of affection, and not to isolate themselves from the community.

Because relationships have such a strong impact on both the individual students' lives, and on the community, should students find themselves being drawn into a relationship, it is asked that they talk with practice leaders to clarify their intentions, and how best to proceed.

Long Term Parking

Space for long term parking at Green Gulch is limited. We ask that Practice Period students take public transportation, get dropped off, or carpool when coming to Green Gulch. If these options are not available, we ask that you include a request for parking in your application.

Fees

Please see the main page for details of fees for participation in the Practice Period. Scholarships are available for students who have completed either the Tassajara summer program or a three-month term as a Work Practice Apprentice. For more information about these programs please call the Green Gulch office.

Suggested Reading

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, *Not Always So* by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, *Being Upright: Zen Meditation and the Bodhisattva Precepts* by Tenshin Reb Anderson.

Applications

Please see the application form for the application deadline. Please read the application thoroughly, and be sure to respond to each question. Please note that you are asked to include a recent photograph, and a \$30 non-refundable application fee. You may submit your application and photo by email and send your application fee separately, addressed as instructed on the application form.

Further information

Please consult the application form or the website at www.sfzc.org for the specific Green Gulch Practice Period for which you are applying. You may direct any further questions you may have to the individual listed as the contact for that Practice Period. You may also ask our main office at 415-354-0411 or ggfoffice@sfzc.org for the appropriate contact information.