

Practice Period Guidelines Green Gulch Farm Zen Center

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, 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 which all members of the community are invited to participate in.

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 the event of 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 on Thursday afternoons and Fridays. Guests are welcome for the public program on Sunday morning, but since this is work time for the practice period, there will not be an opportunity for you to visit with guests on Sundays. Guests should depart before dinner on Friday, and after lunch on Sunday. If there is some need for a visitor to remain overnight, you may discuss the situation with the Ino ahead of time and request an exception.

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.

Guidelines for Cloud Hall and Other Housing

- Cloud Hall is a quiet practice space. Conversations at all times should be quiet. Please be aware that sound carries quite easily from one room to another.
- Silent periods during practice periods are from 7:30 pm until after breakfast the following morning.
- Due to the great danger of fire in Cloud Hall, no candles or incense may be used in rooms.
- Heaters are provided and must be plugged into power strips; please keep them on low settings and turn off when you are not in the room. Do not use any other type of heater.
- In cold weather, please help to keep a fire going in the central stove in Cloud Hall and keep your door open to heat your room.
- Rooms are provided with basic furnishings; please do not move furniture to another room. You may hang pictures on the wall but do not hang anything outside your room. Check with the Guest Student Manager before making any changes in the physical space.
- Telephones may not be installed in rooms in Cloud Hall.
- Storage space at Green Gulch is limited. Neatly pack and label all boxes. Take all your belongings with you when you leave; Green Gulch is not responsible for anything left behind.
- When moving to another room at Green Gulch or when leaving, thoroughly clean your room for the next person.

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+tax. 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, and 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

An important part of Zen practice is having a formal private meeting with a teacher. We refer to such a meeting with a Senior Dharma Teacher or abbot as “dokusan.” The Practice Period leader’s ceremonial attendant (“jisha”) will arrange this meeting for practice period participants. The Tanto (Head of Practice) will also have practice discussions with all participants, arranged by her attendant (“jiko”).

Practice period participants are welcome to request additional meetings with the Practice Period Leader and/or Tanto, as well as to meet with other Green Gulch practice leaders to discuss issues related to practice, living in community, and any concerns and interests that arise over the course of the Practice Period. The practice leaders at Green Gulch are all senior practitioners who have 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 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.

It is our practice to accept the food offered by the kitchen. Please eat in the dining room or on the deck, and not in the kitchen. Usually, meals are silent for the first ten minutes; the library is available for completely silent meals. Between meals, fruit, bread, etc. are available in the dining room, as well as leftovers and items designated by the Tenzo. Do not take other food from the kitchen or prepare personal meals without permission. We encourage the practice of sitting down when eating or drinking.

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.

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 determine 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

Participation in the Practice Period costs \$1,650 for the entire 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.

Applications

Applications for the Fall 2009 practice period are due at Green Gulch by September 1, 2009. 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.

Further inquires/sending application

You may direct questions and your application to:

Abbot's Assistant

Green Gulch Farm Zen Center

1601 Shoreline Hwy

Muir Beach, CA 94965

gfabbotassist@sfzc.org

415.354.0427