

Meditation in Southeast Asia

Compiled by Dieter Baltruschat
Translated by Katharina Titkemeyer
Munich, March 2004

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhassa

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Translated from German into English by Katharina Titkemeyer

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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.

Because of the low cost of living (subletting is widespread and long-term rent for bungalows can be as low as US\$ 3.80 a day) and its pleasant climate, Thailand is well suited for long individual retreats, say, the entire winter. On less frequented islands or in national parks you can find beautiful isolated spots.

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, in English).

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.

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.

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.

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.: meditation 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 Wat Pah Nanachat, last updated March 2003

Address: early registration strongly recommended!
Wat Pah Nanachat
The Guest Monk
Ban Bung Wai, Amphur Warin Chamrap
Ubonratchathani 34310, Thailand
Internet: www.forestsangha.org/index.html

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

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

There is a new monastery homepage under construction: www.sirimangalo.org

Location: The Insight Meditation Center is in Chomthong near Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. The main temple houses the famous Takkhinamoli-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 Piyawaram 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 Phra 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 Kow Tahm International Meditation Center

by Dieter Baltruschat, using a leaflet of Wat Kow Tahm; updated September 2003

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

Dates 2004: June 13th to 22nd; July 8th to 27th (20-day retreat).

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 Nathong 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, yoga exercises in the morning, and quite interesting lectures. For former students of Rosemary and Steve Weissman a 20-day course is held once yearly. 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 3500 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 (for increased safety, bring disinfectant).

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.

1.7 Wat Pah Ban Thad

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

Address: Wat Pah Ban Thad
c/o Songserm Service
89 Phosi Road, Udon Thani 41000
no preregistration necessary
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: Phra Ajahn Maha Bua (a.k.a. Maha Boowa), the abbot, is one of the most famous meditation teachers in Thailand and the last living disciple of Ajahn Mun (small museum dedicated to Ajahn Mun in Wat Paa Sutthawat in Sakon Nakhon, approx. 100 km east of Udon Thani).

Teacher: Ajahn Pannavaddho (British) has been living here for about 50 years and is highly regarded for his deep knowledge and friendly manner. If desired, he gives valuable advice for practice. Sometimes the German monk Tan Martin is available for an interview or a Dhamma talk in a small group.

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.

1.8 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 four times 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.

1.9 Wat Tungsamakeedhamm

source: leaflet

Address: Nong Pak Naag
Sam Chuk, Suphanburi, 72130 Thailand
Tel: (35) 571645, E-mail: mckaruna@yahoo.com

Location and Description: 5 km outside of Sam Chuk, Suphanburi-province (approx. 130 km from Bangkok). It is a quiet monastery comprising 200 rai surrounded by rice fields. There live 30–50 monks, 100 nuns and varying laypeople.

Teacher: Acharn Sangwahn Khemmako.

Accommodation: Individual cottages with Thai-style bathroom, running water and electricity.

Food: One free meal with plenty of variety is provided each day.

Language: Teachings are given in Thai. English- and German-speaking translators are available. Several westerners have stayed here. Some nuns who have stayed here for many years help with translations into English and German.

Daily routine: Practice is individual and intensive and is done in one's own room. There is morning chanting (3–4 a.m.) evening-chanting (6–7 p.m.) for monks and nuns. Laypeople are welcome to participate.

Teaching method: Interviews are generally held every few days.

Meditation method: Mindfulness of breathing (Anapanasati), four foundations of mindfulness (4 Satipatthana) and other meditation subjects as taught in the scriptures.

Travel information: From the northern or southern bus terminal in Bangkok it is a 2- to 3-hour bus journey to Sam Chuk. One can get to Wat Tungsamakeedhamm by motorcycle taxi or pick-up truck.

Note: The Wat was recommended by two persons, but one report by an experienced

meditator was rather critical.

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.
1. 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 Santisukh Tudongsathan (Wat Pa Pae)

by Kay Zumwinkel

Address: Baan Pa Pae, Mae Taeng, Chiang Mai
no registration 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.

Language: The Ajahn speaks a clear central Thai and a little English.

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.

1.12 Samnak Songh Boonyawat

by Kay Zumwinkel

Contact: Khun Suwaree
c/o Toyota Interyont
24/99 Mu 6, Th. Bypass
A. Meuang, Chonburi 20000
Tel: 038-798833
E-mail: swjen@cscoms.com
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.

1.13 Sivali Meditation Centre

by Malinee Polte

Address: preregistration mandatory!
Sivali Meditation Centre, P.O. Box 43, Hangdong Post Office
Chiang Mai 50230, Thailand
E-mail : malinee@sivalicentre.com Internet
Internet: ww.sivalicentre.com
Tel. +66-53-464 592; mobile phone within Thailand: 06-180 1830

Location: The center is about 45 km outside of Chiang Mai in the midst of the wooded hills of Northern Thailand, on the foothills of Dooi Inthanon, the country's highest peak. A tranquil and natural setting is conducive to attaining good meditation results in a short time.

How to get there: From Bangkok to Chiang Mai there are 4 night trains (approx. 13 hs., sleeper approx. US\$ 15), many busses or 10 flights daily (flight time approx. 1 h., approx. US\$ 60).

On the first day of the course participants are picked up in Chiang Mai City at about 2:30 p.m. 5 or 10 days later, respectively, they are dropped off in Chiang Mai City.

Tradition and emphasis: Thai Theravada (Dhammayut/Forest Monastery),

Samatha and Vipassana. Meditation practice according to the traditional „middle way“ (no torture, but no idleness either).

Meditation technique and schedule of retreat: Morning, noon, and evening meditation is in a group. Malinee guides the group in order to calm the mind and to understand the nature of mind. Before each noon session there is a guided walking meditation. Every afternoon Malinee talks to the participants individually to give counsel for faster progress and a better understanding of buddhist principles. The goal of Theravada meditation practice (Dhammayut/Forest Monastery) is to overcome kilesa (hatred, greed, and spiritual uncleanliness) and tanha (desire). Desire leads to unhappiness. Participants will learn to understand desire and the nature of hate, greed, and spiritual uncleanliness. Courses take five or ten days and are held in simple English. A German translator is at hand.

Teacher and course instruction: Courses are held by Ms. Malinee Polte. She was born in Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand, studied computer programming in New York, and worked as a programmer for five years in the U.S. and in Thailand. Inquiries into the meaning of life lead to her resolve, in 1986, to take her vow as a Buddhist nun (Theravada). Over ten years she lived as a nun, largely in the solitude of various forest monasteries in Thailand. Her long experience with meditation has changed her life. Back in wordly life they permit her to reconcile Buddhist ethics with the demands of everyday life.

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

Course duration and dates: Courses are five or ten days. There are two courses per month. For dates, check www.sivalicentre.com. **In order to facilitate an intensive experience in this short a time, participant number is limited to 6 per course.**

Lodging: Each participant lives in his/her own kuti. Areas for male and female participants are separated. There are four separate toilets/baths for the six participants. White attire, towels, blankets, mosquito nets, mattresses, sheets, sandals, umbrellas, soap, shampoo etc. are provided.

Food: According to the forest monastic tradition there is only a morning meal, although if required, biscuits and fruit are available between 11:30 and 12:00 a.m. Food is rich and excellent and is delivered from a nearby restaurant. Vegetarians or

persons who don't eat meat should mention this at registration and orders will be placed accordingly.

Medical care: Very good by Asian standards. The nearest clinic is approx. 3 km. The area is not considered malaria area.

Costs: The center does not subsist on donations and participant number is limited to 6 per course. Costs for a 5-day course are 5500 Baht (approx. US\$ 160) and contain transport, lodging, food, items of daily use, a commentary and guidance and teaching.

Rules: All guests commit themselves to adhere to the eight silas (moral precepts).

Daily schedule:

- 5:30 a.m.: morning bell
- 5:50 a.m.: meditation
- 8:00 a.m.: meal
- 10:00 a.m.: individual practice in hut
- 11:30 a.m.: (if necessary, biscuits and fruit)
- 12:00 a.m.: walking meditation
- 12:30 a.m.: meditation
- 2:30 p.m.: Malinee talks to each participant
- 5:00 p.m.: joint drink and Dhamma talk
- 7:00 p.m.: meditation

Climate and best time to go: Pleasant all year round. November to Februar a little cooler and dry, March to May a little hotter and dry, June to October a bit more humid, although it sometimes doesn't rain for weeks.

Notes: Courses are suitable for beginners and advanced meditators because instruction is on an individual basis with the exception of the joint meditation sessions. All items of daily use, with exception of your tooth brush, are provided by the center. It might be a good idea to bring a flashlight and insect repellent.

1.14 Samnak Song Tham Krabok (drug withdrawal)

information from the internet

Address: Samnak Song Tham Krabok
Amphoe Phra Phutthabaat
Province Saraburi, Thailand

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\$ 600. A return ticket Bangkok/Yangon may be as little as US\$ 220, but the regular price for return tickets from Europe is about US\$ 1200.

Customarily, at entry, US\$ 300 compulsory exchange are charged. 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.

In the unlikely event that the meditation visa doesn't come through in time, fly to Bangkok and apply for a tourist visa. Otherwise you might lose your flight to Asia.

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

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 lowering 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:

in Myanmar: – "Hse Main Gon" Forest Center

– Pyin U Lwin (Maymyo)

– Mawlmyaing

worldwide: – Sydney, Australien

– Panditarama Lumbini International Vipassana Meditation Centre
Lumbini Garden, Nepal
Tel: 00977-71-80118

– 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

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

Tel: Forest Meditation Centre (Hse Main Gon): 0095-1-247211

Retreat Saddhamma-Foundation: 1.12.2004–31.1.2005

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 long 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
Thanlyin Township
Tel: 056-21927 oder 056-21830 (English)
Contact address in Yangon: U Nyunt Tin, Tel: 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
contact at Rangoon: U Thet Tin
30 Myananda Lane, Kyank Grove Quarter
Yankin Township, Yangon

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 Phra 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
Contact at Yangon (Rangoon): U Thet Tin
30 Myananda Lane, Kyank Grove Quarter, Yankin Township, Yangon

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
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.

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
Yangon, 11201 Myanmar (Burma)
Tel: (+95) 01 541971, 552501
Fax 289960, 289961
Internet: www.mahasi.com

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 direct 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 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").

2.11 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.

2.12 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

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

Tel./Fax: 94-08-223678

E-mail: bps@mail.lanka.net

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 and Samanera S.

Address: Nilambe Meditation Centre
Galaha (near 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 20 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 Bungalow 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).

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

Language(s): English and Sinhalese.

Course duration and dates: Individual guidance, hence no particular dates.

Rules and daily schedule: No stringent silence. The day begins at 5 a.m. with a sitting period. After that yoga, breakfast and working meditation. Then sitting and walking alternatedly until lunch. Afternoons, sitting and walking 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 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 300 rupees per day (exchange rate 2003: 1 US = approx. 97 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: 0094-8-225471, 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: 0094-8-34649
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: Donations.

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: 0094-1-694100

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: Donations.

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.

Address: Island Hermitage (Polgasduwa)
To the Monk in Charge
80250 Dodanduwa, Galle District, Sri Lanka
Tel: 0094-75-452453, E-mail: ih@col7.metta.lk

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 lagoon 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: Donations.

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: 94-01-570306, E-mail :kandubod@sltnet.lk
Internet: <http://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. 1 hour by taxi from the airport to Kanduboda, then to Colombo about ½ h. 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 donors 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. Buddhadasa

A comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma – Bhikkhu Bodhi

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

In This Very Life – Ven. U Pandita