



Welcome Guide for Residential In-Person Retreats

We look forward to welcoming you to our lovely Big Bear Retreat Center. This is a wonderful opportunity you have given to yourself to enjoy the tranquility of nature, and we look forward to offering you this experience. In this letter, you will find helpful information regarding your visit to the retreat center. Please reach out to the Retreat Manager if you have any additional questions about the center before your arrival.

COVID POLICY: For this retreat, vaccines with booster will be required as well as a rapid antigen test on arrival (provided by the center). Proof of vaccine will be required digitally or shown at registration. Masking is encouraged but optional indoors.

Contact us if there are issues or questions.

Link to the pre-arrival online waiver (coming soon)

WHAT TO EXPECT:

This will be an in-person silent, insight meditation retreat co-hosted by Meditation Coalition and Big Bear Retreat Center. In general, the structure of an Insight meditation retreat includes time for sitting meditation, walking meditation, rest, mindful eating, and Dharma talks to deepen your embodied understanding along with instructions and guidance, and short practice discussion meetings with the teachers to support you within the container of a silent retreat. All guests are asked to remain on the center grounds (apart from the hiking trails) throughout the duration of the retreat.

Big Bear Retreat Center is located up in the Southern California mountains - a 2.5-hour drive from Los Angeles. We are near the city of Big Bear Lake and are situated on about 100 acres of forested land. It is hilly in some areas and mostly forested around the center. We offer about 13 single story cabin buildings for residence, dining, and meditation. Our capacity is about 40-60 adults for retreats.

WHAT TO BRING:

- Personal Food and Snacks (*any personal or extra that you'd like to have*) for your visit (*there are refrigerators and pantries in each cabin and at the dining hall for your use*)
- Flashlight or headlamp (*the retreat center is lit at night and we do typically offer extra flashlights and lanterns*)
- Unscented Toiletries - shampoo/conditioner/soap (*the center has some*)
- Linens (*optional - see more below*)
- Warm layers of winter clothing for night and early mornings (temperatures drop!)
*in particular during winter months, bring warm clothes for potential walking meditation periods potentially outside (30-45 mins)
- Sunscreen and hat
- Socks or Slippers for meditation hall and cabin
- Shoes that are easy to slip on/off for indoor spaces
- Reusable water bottle
- Reusable thermos for hot beverages (i.e. tea)
- Hiking boots or comfortable sneakers for walking around center or trails
- Personal Meditation Supplies (optional) - the center has a limited supply but generally

- one for each participant of the zabutans and zafus (cushions)
- Blanket for the meditation hall (optional) - center has a limited supply around 1 per person
- Yoga Mats and props (optional) - center has a limited supply of about 1 per person
- Melatonin, sleep aid, or earplugs (if needed)
- Personal medication
- Anything that may help you acclimate to the altitude (7000 ft)

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Each residence cabin has 3-4 rooms, sharing bathrooms, a kitchen, a living room, and a deck outside in nature. There is sometimes a mirror and a small clothes-hanging area in your room. Two bathrooms are located in each cabin. **Shoes are not allowed in residence cabins and the meditation hall.** Every building offers outdoor decks to enjoy our natural environment and trails throughout the land (and adjacent national forest) for nature walks.

Please be aware that we are at 7,000 feet in elevation. If you are sensitive to altitude, we recommend taking and bringing any necessary precautions to help you adjust to this environment smoothly. This includes melatonin or aids for sleeping.

PRICING AND SHARED ROOMS:

We strive hard to make these retreats as affordable as possible, and for this reason we offer different pricing options based on room choices. Your choice guarantees your room type. However, if there is space or additional options, we may upgrade your lodging option. Shared accommodations are generally cozy rooms with shared hallway bathrooms.

RETREAT FEES AND TEACHER DANA:

Your retreat fees go towards the accommodations and running retreats for Big Bear Retreat Center and Meditation Coalition. All our staff are paid, and not dana-based. **Teacher Dana:** as is the case in Theravada Buddhism tradition, teachers are not compensated for the retreat and offer the teachings freely. They receive dana as an expression of gratitude. There will be an opportunity at the end of the retreat to learn more about the practice of Dana (generosity) and offer to the teachers. [Learn more about the practice of dana to teachers.](#)

DOOR CODE:

Cabins have keyless locks with door code(s) that will be shared with you upon arrival. Each bedroom locks from the inside.

NOBLE SILENCE:

Each Insight meditation residential retreat is practiced in silence. Students and the community take the vow of noble silence typically at the opening session (after dinner) and end sometimes towards the end of the retreat. The teachers will share more about this practice during the retreat. In order to best support the community and retreat container, we strongly ask that everyone take part in the commitment of noble silence, including not using phones or technology, during the retreat.

MEALS:

Meals are provided and served for all guests at the dining hall. BBRC provides three freshly prepared, healthful, nourishing and supportive vegetarian meals a day - breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Meals for retreats are generally a light breakfast, heavier lunch, and light dinner (soup and salad) to support the rhythm of practice and retreat. The kitchen uses fresh, organic, and local ingredients when possible. The kitchen also offers additional snacks in the dining hall which is open 24/7. Coffee is served daily.

The kitchen does its best to accommodate as many diets and flavors, building from an ayurvedic-inspired menu with minimal seasoning. Yogis are also welcome to bring their own snacks or particular ingredients for the duration of the retreat. In each cabin, as well as the dining hall, there is a refrigerator and pantry space to store your own snacks.

Due to our location on the mountain, we source our sustainable and seasonal ingredients at least a week in advance which means that it is hard to accommodate last minute changes. Please ensure your dietary restrictions are up to date before arriving at the center – at least one week prior to your arrival. **We ask that you not change your dietary plan after the retreat has started, unless it is absolutely necessary.** This helps our chefs adequately prepare, accommodate, and nourish everyone.

Our [kitchen has provided this resource for best preparing for meals](#) at the center. **Please reach out if you have any questions or extreme dietary restrictions.**

DAILY WORKING MEDITATION - “YOGI JOBS”:

Participation in this retreat will involve a light daily working meditation (approx. 30 minutes each day) to support the community experience. When you arrive at registration, you will pick a daily task to complete with mindful attention. Please let us know if you have any physical challenges that might impact your ability to perform certain tasks. Please also bring closed toe shoes that you can change into in the event you choose a yogi job in the kitchen.

UNSCENTED PRODUCTS:

We ask that all retreatants use unscented products during their time on retreat, including unscented shampoo, conditioner, body wash, soaps and abstaining from use of perfumes, colognes, and any scented products or sprays. This helps the community to focus on the practice during retreat. If you need any unscented products, the retreat center has one on hand and can lend. Please let someone know at registration on arrival or during the retreat.

MEDITATION & YOGA SUPPLIES AND CHAIRS:

The center has several meditation and yoga supplies to offer participants, enough for at least 1 per person. If you have your own supplies and prefer to bring them, you are more than welcome to use any of your own supplies. There are chairs available and a limited number of meditation cushions, yoga mats, and other props provided by the center, available in the meditation hall. Learn more here about [Meditation Posture Information](#).

LINENS:

The center provides all the linens: towels, bed sheets, blankets and pillows. You do not need to reserve these ahead of time. They are available for self-service upon arrival at registration. Guests may bring their own personal linens (optional).

ARRIVAL:

Your cabin and room details will be provided on arrival at the registration table upon arrival. **Please plan to arrive between 2pm and 4pm on the day of your arrival.** Allow for plenty of time and account for traffic when planning your drive (especially on Fridays!). If you need to arrive later than 4pm, please let us know. If you'd like to request an early check-in before 2pm, please let us know and we may be able to accommodate.

DEPARTURE/CLEANING:

The retreat schedule will typically end by 11am and checkout time is typically 12pm,

unless otherwise specified for your retreat program. Big Bear Retreat Center thanks you in advance for cleaning your cabin before departure. You can find the cleaning guide posted in your cabin. Generally, if guests would like to stay the day at the center, they are welcome to do so as long as they are out of the cabins by checkout. We will share more during retreat closing announcements.

VOLUNTEERING AND EXTRA NIGHT STAY

For those interested in staying an extra night before the retreat, or after the retreat, we generally offer a complimentary night before or after in exchange for volunteering to support in the setup or cleaning of the center before and after the retreat. Please contact the retreatmanager@bigbearretreatcenter.org to arrange ahead of time and for more details. We will announce at the closing for anyone interested in staying an extra night after the retreat. We welcome and appreciate your support and service to the center!

WIFI AND CELL SERVICE:

Most areas on the property will get clear cell service, except by the front gate. Wifi is available in some of the common areas. Generally, noble silence includes not using your phone. More information will be provided at arrival. The staff office (at the dining hall) is available if use of technology or calls are absolutely necessary during your retreat.

COMMUNICATION, FLASHLIGHTS AND CLOCKS:

Noble silence generally includes refraining from any use of communication (technology), particularly with those outside of the retreat. Each cabin is equipped with walkie talkies in case of emergencies and there is a note system / protocol for communicating any needs with retreat managers or teachers. The center also provides a few flashlights and clocks (we recommend bringing your own if you have, in case we run out).

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

For emergencies for others to contact you during retreat, you may give loved ones or colleagues the **BBRC Office Cell (909-547-5880)**. Text is preferred or ensure they leave a voicemail as we are often in sessions and unable to answer. They can also contact us at retreatmanager@bigbearretreatcenter.org. Please note, **this number is NOT available to retreat participants once the retreat has commenced**. We will cover emergency communications for participants during the retreat.

TRANSPORTATION AND WEATHER CONDITIONS:

During our winter months (November to May) we recommend referencing our winter driving guide (located at the bottom of this welcome letter).

PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENTLY ABLED:

Big Bear Retreat Center does have some limitations, so if you are a person concerned about your mobility or ability to navigate the retreat and the center, please reach out before the retreat. This way we can better understand what is needed to support you as we would like you to be able to participate in this retreat as fully as possible. If you need support and you haven't yet let us know, please email us.

WATER CONSERVATION:

While you are on retreat at BBRC, we ask for your assistance in reducing water consumption. While we already have low flow toilets, we would greatly appreciate your extra efforts in water conservation such as taking shorter showers, turning off running

water whenever possible and reporting any plumbing leaks to our Retreat Managers.

FIRE SAFETY:

Please practice extra precautions in fire safety while on retreat. We ask that there are no outdoor fires in the forest and no candles in your cabin.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES:

We have an electric vehicle charging station in front of the COUNCIL building with a 220V charger, as well as extension cords available to plug into your cabin on a regular outlet. You will need to bring your own charging cable for your car.

THINGS TO DO:

Once the retreat starts, there will be a set full schedule. In general, we have several hiking trails on and from the property. We are happy to show you where to find the best hiking trails. Generally the best activity is quiet time in nature here.

ACTIVITIES IN AND AROUND BIG BEAR LAKE:

Here are some resources for activities and sites around Big Bear before or after your retreat. Please refer to www.BigBear.com as a resource on additional activities in the area

- Kayak, paddle boarding, Boat rentals on the lake (summer months)
- Restaurants and shopping (especially the The Village)
- Mountain Biking
- Hikes (several) - alltrails.com/us/california/big-bear-lake

LOST AND FOUND:

If you leave anything behind, please email Lost and Found at: retreatmanager@bigbearretreatcenter.org. We will keep items for 30 days. BBRC will ship items, but you will be responsible for all the costs related to shipping your lost item.

ADDRESS:

Big Bear Retreat Center
1000 Sugarpine Rd, Big Bear, CA, 92315
retreatmanager@bigbearretreatcenter.org

***Please do not have anything mailed to the center. If you need to have something mailed for your retreat, please check with the onsite retreat manager or email us.*

MAPS:

At the end of this guide we've provided some maps of the center and hiking trails. We include these in the welcome binder of each cabin, however if you would like your own copy we recommend printing ahead of time and bringing.

We look forward to welcoming you to Big Bear Retreat Center. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to send an email at retreatmanager@bigbearretreatcenter.org.

Sincerely,

Big Bear Retreat Center & Meditation Coalition

COVID SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR IN-PERSON RETREATS AT BIG BEAR RETREAT CENTER

PLEASE REVIEW THE REQUIREMENTS PROVIDED FOR YOUR SPECIFIC RETREAT VIA EMAIL

We are delighted to continue to offer opportunities to gather for in-person retreats at the retreat center. In order to continue this offering, we are extremely mindful of the health, safety, and security of all of our guests at the retreat center. In order to provide a space that feels safe, secure, and easeful as best we can, we will continue to follow county (San Bernardino County), state, and federal (CDC) covid guidelines and recommendations covid, as well as our own safety and procedures.

We appreciate your patience and understanding as this allows us to stay open and operate an in-person group retreat ensuring the health and safety concerns of everyone on retreat at the center given individual and public conditions.

Current Safety Protocols at the Retreat Center:

These are the primary safety guidelines and procedures at the retreat center.

- **Vaccination:** See retreat-specific email information.
- **Negative PCR Covid Test:** See retreat-specific information above (p1).
- **Waiver Form:** All guests are required to fill a waiver form 24-72 hours before arrival to confirm covid safety and understanding of policy.
- **Masking:** Current masking guidelines are subject to change. Please see your latest retreat communications.
- **Ventilation/Air Filters:** The meditation hall has several air filters and we practice ventilating the shared spaces as much as possible. Guests are encouraged and welcome to open/close windows at any point. BBRC also has several options for outdoor spaces for dining, walking and sitting, particularly in the warmer months.
- **Surface Cleaning:** Regular sanitizing and cleaning of high touch areas are practiced at the center. Guests are also highly encouraged to volunteer to clean surfaces and handles regularly, with sanitizer and spray available in shared areas and cabins.
- **Sick Policy:** If a practitioner or teacher becomes sick with Covid symptoms, they will be asked to move to a designated quarantine cabin onsite or nearby for approx. 24 hours, and if serious, return home. We will also ask them to take a rapid antigen self-test onsite, and if they test positive for COVID-19, they must exit the retreat. If they cannot return home due to travel restrictions, we will support their quarantine to the best of our ability. We will do everything possible to accommodate and allow for continuity of practice during this period.

SHARED ROOMS: The center continues to offer shared and single room options given the precautions above. Our residential cabins are generally 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms with a mix of shared and single rooms. If you are concerned for your safety and are unable to afford a single room option, please contact the retreat center.

Additional Resources for Covid PCR Testing

There are some PCR testing facilities that can give results in less than 24 hours, especially in the LA area. I would recommend searching “quick result PCR near me” and inquiring on

options. Most testing options should be free or reimbursed by your health insurance. Please reach out if I can be a helpful resource for you in any way.

- <https://www.covidclinic.org/san-bernardino/> (with 2-hr Rapid PCR and next day Expedited PCR test options in San Bernardino and several locations statewide and nationwide)
- <https://pathmdlabs.com/>
- <https://curative.com/>

Winter Driving in Big Bear, CA

November to May, especially December to February

It can snow in Big Bear from November to May. The months of heaviest snow are typically January and February. Since we are a heavily trafficked ski town with many visitors, the roads are regularly and quickly well maintained and plowed. **Roads are typically clear within a day or two of a large snow storm, if not the same day.** We've provided some recommendations and resources during our winter months.

****During winter months, especially during heavy snow months, it is REQUIRED to carry snow chains in your vehicle for your safety.** These can be purchased at the bottom of the mountain or in your local city, and can often be returned if unused. More details below.**

TRANSPORTATION AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

During our winter season, please be sure to check road conditions before driving:

- <https://kbhr933.com/big-bear-roads/>
- <https://roads.dot.ca.gov/>
- <http://quickmap.dot.ca.gov/>

Caltrans offers resources on [Winter Driving Tips](#) and a [Winter Driving Brochure](#).

You can also monitor Big Bear weather here on [Ben's Weather](#) or [The Weather Channel](#).

ROADS UP THE MOUNTAIN (3 options):

We have 3 main roads to Big Bear: the 330/18 through Highland (from the West), the 18 through Victorville/Hesperia (North), and the 38 through Redlands/Mentone (South/East). Please check road conditions ahead of time during winter months. All three are well maintained main highways.

REFUNDS DUE TO TRAVEL:

In the event of **road closures due to weather**, you will be able to receive a full refund or apply the balance towards a future retreat. We will only offer a refund if the roads are closed due to weather. Please let us know well in advance if you anticipate any issues driving in winter weather conditions. Please note there are 3 ways up the mountain and an alternative route may be necessary.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

During the winter months, we recommend not driving at night up/down the mountain to reduce unfavorable or icy road conditions.

TIRE CHAINS

Tire chains may be required to use for driving up or down the mountain. Please keep in mind weather may shift if you are here for a longer retreat. **It is required to travelin the mountains with snow tire chains in the winter months.** Tire chains range from \$35 to over \$100 depending on tire size. O'Reilly Auto Parts, Pep Boys, AutoZone, and Amazon are all places where you can purchase chains. Many, such as Pep Boys, will accept returns on unused chains. (You only need one set). Please inquire before purchasing. **We strongly recommend purchasing chains at the bottom of the mountain, as prices up here are much higher and sometimes supplies run out on the mountain.** The retreat center is not able to purchase chains for guests.

TIRE CHAIN SERVICE

During snow conditions and icy roads tire chains may be required. Caltrans partners with approved private contractors to install your tire chains at the base of the mountain. They accept cash and cards (cash typically). Simply pull over to the service area on the side of the road and there will be many service providers on standby to get you safely on your way. Fees range from \$20-\$40 typically. **YOU MUST ALREADY HAVE A SET OF CHAINS IN YOUR POSSESSION. THEY DO NOT HAVE ANY FOR SALE.**

CHAIN REQUIREMENT LEVELS

When chain controls are established, signs will be posted along the road indicating the type of requirement. There are Three Levels of Chain Requirements in California:

- **Requirement 1 (R1):** Chains are required on all vehicles except passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks under 6,000 pounds gross weight and equipped with snow tires on at least two drive wheels. Chains must be carried by vehicles using snow tires. All vehicles towing trailers must have chains on one drive axle. Trailers with brakes must have chains on at least one axle
- **Requirement 2 (R2):** Chains or traction devices are required on all vehicles except four wheel/all wheel drive vehicles with snow-tread/all-weather tires on all four wheels. NOTE: (Four wheel/all wheel drive vehicles must carry traction devices in chain control areas)
- **Requirement 3 (R3):** Chains or traction devices are required on all vehicles, no exceptions.

GETTING AROUND THE CENTER

If you are expecting snow during your retreat, we generally have you covered once you have arrived. It is always a good idea to bring layers and warm clothes, along with good shoes for the weather. The center offers cleats with spikes to slip onto guest shoes to provide traction for all guests in snow/ice. We also offer gators to cover pants if hiking into deeper snow, and snow shoes for borrowing. All cabins have central heating. We also offer a few winter clothes for borrow at the dining hall.

If you have any questions about the weather for your upcoming retreat or the best way to prepare before you arrive, please contact the retreatmanager@bigbearretreatcenter.org.

Maps

Some maps of the property and hiking trails that you may find handy. These, along with more hiking trail maps, are also located in the welcome binders of each cabin.

[Hiking trails pdf \(click to download\)](#)

