

Information for Foreign Meditators

at Pa-Auk Forest Monastery

Pa-Auk Forest Monastery (“Pa-Auk Tawya” in Burmese) is a Buddhist monastery in the Theravāda tradition, with emphasis on the teaching and practice of both samatha (tranquillity) and vipassanā (insight) meditation. The number of residents varies seasonally from approximately 500 to 1,000 – this includes more than 100 foreign monks, nuns and lay practitioners, coming from more than twenty different countries. All are here to practise meditation under the guidance of the Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw, the abbot and principal teacher at this monastery.

This document provides you with an outline of the monastery's basic requirements and services, plus it tells you how to get here. For more detailed information on the teaching methods and rules of the monastery, please visit the websites listed in our Resource Guide (see page 4). You may also write directly to the monastery.

Arrival

- Pa-Auk Forest Monastery is divided into the Upper, Middle and Lower Monasteries. Upon arrival, foreigners must register at the following locations: male residents– the Registration Office for Foreigners in the Upper Monastery; female residents – the Lower Monastery Office. Please be sure to obtain and read a copy of our “Rules for Foreign Meditators,” which you can pick up at either office.

In General

- Meditators must strictly observe the fourfold purification during their stay here. This purification consists of:
 - (1) The 227 rules of the *Pāṭimokkha* for Theravāda monks; the 10 precepts and 75 *Sekhiya* (training) rules for novices; and the 5, 8 or 10 precepts for laypersons and nuns
 - (2) Restraint of the six sense faculties –of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind
 - (3) Purification of livelihood (Right Livelihood) – livelihood that accords with the precepts
 - (4) Reflection on (and moderation in) the use of the four requisites – food, shelter, clothing and medicine

Meditation

- Everyone must attend the group sittings at their respective meditation hall. Group sittings are held at the following times: 4:00-5:30 am, 7:30-9:00 am, 1:00-2:30 pm, 3:30-5:00 pm and 7:30-9:00 pm.
- Interviews with Pa-Auk meditation teachers are an important aid to one's practice. New arrivals should come for an interview every day (or make a suitable arrangement that accords with their meditation teacher's schedule).
- Meditators must practise according to the instructions of their meditation teacher.

Smoking, Drinking and Drugs

- Smoking, drinking, chewing tobacco or betel nut, and the use of recreational drugs are strictly forbidden. If you use any of these items, please dispose of them before entering the monastery.
- There are no exceptions to this rule. If you break this rule, you will be asked to leave.

Diet and Piṇḍapāta

- Meals are offered in the Piṇḍapātasāla (alms hall). Please arrive for piṇḍapāta at the following times:
 - Breakfast – 5:30-6:00 am (depending on the time of dawn)
 - Lunch – 10:00-10:15 am.
- The kitchen prepares a vegetarian diet only; no special diets are offered.
- Boiled and filtered drinking water are available at various locations throughout the monastery.

Attire

- Theravāda monks and novices should wear only allowable robes, slippers, etc. Robes must be kept clean. Highly colourful robes (red, bright yellow, etc.) are not acceptable.
- Lay practitioners should dress modestly at all times:

Men – no bare shoulders, no bare calves, no bare knees; no shorts, no sleeveless shirts, vests or undershirts; no ripped or otherwise improper attire.

Women – no bare shoulders, midriff, calves or knees; no short skirts, no shorts, no sleeveless shirts or blouses; no thin, transparent, tight, revealing, brightly coloured or otherwise improper attire.

Medical Care

- There are quarters for the sick and a clinic, with a resident doctor. A local doctor trained in Western medicine visits once a week; another trained in traditional Burmese medicine visits once a fortnight.

International Mail

- Excessive correspondence can disturb meditation. Please keep your correspondence to a minimum.
- Outgoing mail should be left in the Outgoing Mailbox at the Piṇḍapātasāla; incoming mail can be picked up on the table next to the Outgoing Mailbox. It is best for important incoming and outgoing letters to be registered.
- International parcels must be picked up in Yangon. Please check at the Lower Monastery Office to see if they can suggest someone to do this for you.
- To protect incoming parcels against loss or damage, all international parcels should be insured. Ask the sender to mail you a copy of the insurance form.
- Be aware that parcels are subject to customs formalities, censorship and duties.

International Telephone Calls

- You can use the telephone in the Lower Monastery Office for incoming calls – service is intermittent and low quality. You will need to go outside the monastery to make outgoing calls; international calls are expensive and must be paid in US dollars.

E-mail/Internet

- Permission to send/receive e-mail is granted on a case-by-case basis.

Monastics and Money

- Theravāda monks, novices and 10-precept nuns are not permitted to use, handle or possess money in any form, including: cash, credit cards, cheques, electronic transactions, gold, silver, jewellery, etc. Monastics who carry their own funds must relinquish them PERMANENTLY before taking up residence in the monastery. There are no exceptions to this rule. (For those monastics with allowable requisite funds, see below.)
- Monastics with allowable requisite funds must arrange for the proper transfer of requisites from their previous location to the Pa-Auk kappiyakāraka (steward; hereafter referred to as “kappiya” for short) or other such person. Transfer of funds MUST follow the prescribed procedure in the *Vinaya* (please refer to the *Pāṭimokkha*, *Nissaggiya Pācittiya* rules 10, 18, 19 & 20).
- If you come to the monastery as a layperson and decide to ordain, you must make proper arrangements for your funds before ordination; this can be done through the monastery kappiya.

Visa Application/Extension, etc.

- If you plan to stay at Pa-Auk Forest Monastery for more than one month, a twenty-eight day entry visa and a three-month meditation visa are generally the easiest to extend. To apply for either of these two types of visas, you will need a Pa-Auk Sponsorship Letter, which can be obtained through a Pa-Auk Contact Person or by writing to the monastery, attention: U Kuṇḍadhāna or U Candimā. Check with the Myanmar Embassy in your home country, to see if they will issue either of these two types of visas to you – be sure to ask how long it will take. If this is not convenient, one option would be to apply in Bangkok (on your way to Myanmar), where you can usually pick up your visa the next day. Contact information for the Bangkok Embassy and a listing of international contact persons can be found in our Resource Guide on page 4.
- Once you get to Pa-Auk Forest Monastery, you can apply for a three-month, six-month or one-year visa extension (stay permit). Payment for your extension can be arranged through the monastery kappiya. He will need 9 passport photos plus sufficient requisite funds in US dollars. Dollar bills must be in good condition: worn, torn, nicked marked or questionable bills are unacceptable.
- Please be aware that visa extension regulations and costs are subject to change.¹ Current cost of a one-year visa extension is US\$90 (thirty-six dollars more if you apply with a tourist visa). The visa extension should be applied for as soon as possible after your arrival in Myanmar. After that, applications for further extensions should be made at least two months before the expiry date of the visa extension.
- If you are a Theravāda monk, novice or 10-precept nun, the monastery will try to cover your expenses, but if the fees are in US dollars, the monastery's Burmese dāyakas (donors) will be unable to pay. So, to be safe, it is best for a dāyaka of your own to make arrangements with a local kappiya to handle the financial side of the extension fees.

¹ For the latest news on visa applications and extensions, please contact Daw Amy at atbbsp@myanmar.com.mm (see Resource Guide on page 4 for contact details).

- If you stay longer than three months, you must obtain a Foreigner's Registration Certificate (FRC), and when you leave, a Departure Form. Please apply for the FRC at least one month in advance.

Sponsorship

- A sponsorship letter grants permission for you to reside at this monastery – nothing more. All financial requirements (including medical, dental, transportation, visas, FRC, departure forms and other requisite items) are your personal responsibility. Please arrive with SUFFICIENT FUNDS (IN US DOLLARS) for the duration of your stay.
- If your visa (or visa extension) was obtained with a Pa-Auk Sponsorship Letter, this means you have agreed to stay at Pa-Auk Forest Monastery for the visa's duration. To use an entry/meditation visa for sightseeing and tourism would constitute an abuse of the privilege granted to you by the Sponsorship Letter and could create problems for the monastery.

Suggested Items to Bring

- The following list of suggested items was compiled by foreign meditators here: 10-12 passport photos; vitamin and herbal supplements; herbal teas; light, comfortable, easy-to-wash clothing; dental floss; toiletries; towel; talcum/medicated powder; large umbrella; earplugs; water resistant sandals; torch/flashlight; battery-powered alarm clock; mosquito repellent; yoga mat (if you practice yoga); spare glasses and copy of your prescription; get dental work done before coming. Most everyday-items can be obtained locally, name brands excluded; voltage here is 220V.

Climate

- There are three seasons in Myanmar: a hot season (March-May); a rainy season (June-Oct.); and a cold season (November-February). Temperatures range from 15° to 40° Centigrade (59° to 104° Fahrenheit).

How to Get to Pa-Auk Forest Monastery from Yangon (Yangon → Mawlamyine → Pa-Auk → Mudon)

- Mawlamyine is 301 kms (187 miles) southeast of Yangon, and the monastery is another 14.5 kms (9 miles) southeast of Mawlamyine. Air-conditioned overnight buses to Mawlamyine/Mudon depart daily from the highway bus station in Yangon. You can buy tickets along the south side of Aung San Stadium, opposite the central train station. Note: If you take the Mudon bus, ask the driver to let you off at “Pa-Auk Tawya” (the bus goes right past the main gate of the monastery on the way to Mudon).
- Travel options include a weekly flight to Mawlamyine and a new train service (not yet in operation) that will go direct from Yangon to Mawlamyine. If you take the train, be sure to go first class.
- Contact persons in Yangon can help you get to the monastery. For a listing of contact persons, please check our Resource Guide on page 4.

PA-AUK RESOURCE GUIDE

Websites

Malaysia	www.Dhamma-s.org (text is in Chinese)
Singapore	www.paaukforestmonastery.org
USA	www.paauk.org

Myanmar Contact Information

MEDITATION CENTRES	PERSONAL CONTACTS
Pa-Auk Forest Monastery Mawlamyine, Mon State, Myanmar Tel: (95) 57-22853	Mr & Mrs Yip Seng Foo No.4 West May Kha No.3 Street Mayangone Township, Yangon E-mail: bluestar@mptmail.net.mm
International Buddhasāsana Meditation Centre Pa-Auk Tawya Branch Thilawar Road (near Kyaik-Khauk Pagoda) Payargon Village, Than Lyin Township, Yangon Tel: (95) 56-21927	Daw Amy (Ms. Amy) 66 A, Sayarsan Road, Bahan Township, Yangon Tel: (95) 1-548129/ (95) 1-556355 E-mail: attbhpp@myanmar.com.mm U Aung Pyone (Mr. Aung Pyone) No (32), Kwet Thit St, Yay Kyaw (7th Qtr, near YMBA) Pazundaung Township, Yangon Tel: (95) 1-293847 • E-mail: uap@mail4u.com.mm

International Contact Information

<u>China</u> Mdm. Liang Xinxin Attention: Ms Ah Min Guangzhou, Peoples Republic of China Tel: (86) 20-84232438 E-mail: kaixinhuanzhaonin@126.com	<u>Sri Lanka</u> Nā Uyana Āranya (monastery) Pansiyagama 60554 Tel: (94) 37-5677328/ (94) 66-2224936 E-mail: nauyana@gmail.com
<u>Japan</u> Myanmar Theravāda Buddhist Association Attention: Ko Ye Tun, Tokyo, Japan Tel: (81) 90-22209886	Dhammika Ashrama (nunnery) Angulgamuwa, Pansiyagama 60554 Tel: (94) 37-5671258 E-mail: dhammikashrama@gmail.com
<u>Singapore</u> Cakkavala Meditation Centre E-mail: cakkavala_sg@yahoo.com.sg Tel: (65) 98488384 – Dr Ng Wai Chong	<u>United States of America</u> Roland Win 15 Palmdale Ave, Daly City, CA 94015 Tel: (1) 650-994-3750 E-mail: RolandRexEntps@aol.com
Visuddha Meditation Centre 107 Jalan Langgar Bedok, Singapore 468559 Tel: (65) 90101663 E-mail: visuddha77@yahoo.com.sg	Brian Johnson 29 Anton Way, Novato, CA 94945 Tel: (1) 415-328-1709 E-mail: upasako@paauk.org
Teoh Soon Seng E-mail: teohss@singnet.com.sg	Kim McLaughlin 568 Arlington Ave, Berkeley, CA 94707 Tel: (1) 510-527-7625 E-mail: kimmcl@pacbell.net
<u>Taiwan</u> Buddhist Hong Shi College No. 121-5 Ta-Tung Village, Guan-Yin Tao Yuan, Taiwan, Republic of China	

Other Addresses

<u>Bangkok</u> Embassy of the Union of Myanmar 132 Sathorn Nua Road, Bangkok, 10500 Tel: (66) 2-233-2237/ (66) 2-234-4698 Business Hours: 9:00-11:30 am & 1:00-3:00 pm, Monday – Friday
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