



KORINJI RINZAI ZEN MONASTERY

臨濟宗 • 祖的山光林禪寺

Residency at Korinji: Information for Applicants

Thank you for your interest in residential Zen practice at Korinji.

The foundation of our Zen monastic life here is an intensive daily schedule of practice including zazen (meditation), sanzen (individual encounters with the Zen master) okyo (chanting/ceremony), samu (physical work), and more. Periods of sesshin (intensive meditation practice) are frequent. Other practices, including complementary disciplines such as fine arts and martial arts, may be undertaken by residents at our abbot's discretion. Korinji is also a non-sectarian center for the practice of several other Japanese Buddhist traditions, and so additional training – for example, in mikkyo (esoteric Buddhist practice) and Shugendo - may similarly be available.

Through a total immersion in practice and with constant contact with teachers and fellow practitioners, all the activities of one's day are undertaken with full concentration, as if "in one breath." It is a life lived in the spirit of the words often found brushed on the han, a wooden sounding board used to signal events in the monastic day:

生死事大 The Question of Birth and Death is great;
無常迅速 How swift is impermanence!
時不待人 Time waits for no one.
慎莫放逸 Be careful not to indulge in idleness

Though we cannot say that monastic life is easy, it is without doubt an unparalleled opportunity to realize your deepest human potentials of wisdom and compassion. Giving ourselves to this training, it is possible to awaken to a new life. Emerging then from the monastery back into the world, the lifelong path of service to others – and to all beings – opens before us. Please read the following information carefully before emailing to inquire.

Motivation, Eligibility, and Application

A Rinzai Zen monastery is not a place to go for spiritual tourism, or out of romantic idealism: it is a challenging environment designed for those who are determined to penetrate fundamental questioning regarding life and death. Our model in this is the Buddha, who found he had no choice but to embark on his spiritual quest. If you are not a person who feels such an acute need to truly plumb the depths of your own existence, we respectfully ask you not to apply to live at Korinji (and in that case, a less demanding practice outside the monastery - as a member of Korinji's extended lay community - is very reasonable to do).

Some of the persons residing at Korinji are ordained or may be training in preparation for ordination. But interest in ordination is not a requirement to practice at Korinji: laypersons are welcome to practice here and train side-by-side with ordained persons.

The following describes our residency eligibility requirements and the application process. Note that some of these requirements are directed primarily to applicants wishing to stay for extended periods of one 3.5 month training period - angō - or longer. Shorter stays as a guest are also possible.

1. Korinji is a senmon dojo—a formal training monastery— and so residential practice here is not appropriate for Zen beginners. The practice done here may be considered elite or professional in level compared to what is found at most other centers. Applicants for residency should therefore have an established practice, including the ability to engage in a minimum of four hours daily of zazen, sitting unmoving in the meditation posture for multiple 30-50 minute periods. Prolonged periods of silence, minimal sleep, and exhaustion are features of life here.

2. Applicants need not be particularly learned regarding Buddhism. But they should make efforts toward establishing a foundation of study, including familiarity with basic Buddhist and Zen teachings. At a minimum, they should have read a number of books: books by reputable scholars or teachers offering “Buddhism 101” teachings, for example regarding the life of Shakyamuni, foundational Sravakayana teachings such as the four noble Truths, eightfold path, dependent origination, karma and rebirth, the major Buddhist traditions, etc.; regarding our Zen path, works such as *The Bodhidharma Anthology*, *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, and Dumoulin’s *Zen Buddhism: A History*; regarding practice, Torei Enji’s *Discourse on the Inexhaustible Lamp* (also published as *The Undying Lamp of Zen*), Omori Roshi’s *Introduction to Zen Training*, and Meido Roshi’s books listed on Korinji’s website.

3. High levels of psychological health, stability, and resilience are absolutely necessary for monastic residency. Sufficient fitness to perform several hours of physical work each day, and to hike in difficult terrain, are requirements.

4. Prospective applicants for long-term residency will be asked to first complete at least one Dai-Sesshin (one week meditation retreat) at Korinji or an equivalent training center. Note: if this requirement is fulfilled elsewhere, but we have not yet met you, an interview (in-person or online) will also be required before you can be accepted.

5. Upon acceptance and confirmation of an arrival date, the applicant may arrive at Korinji. The traditional entrance tests of niwazume (a day or more spent outside, prostrate in unmoving supplication) and tangaryō (several days of solitary, constant meditation practice while being observed) are generally required for those intending long term stay.

6. After successfully completing these entrance tests, a one-month probationary period begins during which the applicant should demonstrate the ability to function well in the monastery environment. At the end of this period a review will be conducted with the applicant to determine if further residency is desirable. If accepted for further residency, the applicant may then continue to stay at Korinji for the remainder of that current angō.

7. Once one has been accepted and committed to an angō period, leaving the monastery is generally not permitted for any reason except in cases of personal emergency (or for agreed-upon work schedules, as described below).
8. At the end of each angō, residents may request to continue residency.
9. Persons wishing to train for Zen ordination at Korinji will generally reside in the monastery for a period of at least one to three years, that is, 2-6 angō plus the seikan periods in-between. There are exceptions to this. Please see the ordination info doc for more information.
10. While ideally one would be able to practice full-time at Korinji without other obligations, we recognize that this is difficult for many today – especially younger students - due to financial pressures. It is therefore possible to reside at Korinji but to leave the grounds periodically for work. It is also possible during non-angō months to leave the monastery for longer periods of time to work without giving up one's spot as a resident. Please let us know if you wish to discuss this kind of work/study schedule at Korinji.
11. One non-traditional aspect of life at Korinji is that we do not differentiate or give any regard to sex or gender identity when it comes to practice. Our residents live and train together, sharing the same communal sleeping space (barracks style, though with sufficient individual privacy for changing and use of showers and toilets), and are in all ways treated the same, with no special consideration given to anyone. Persons who cannot tolerate this should not apply. Following is our inclusivity statement:

Korinji is an inclusive community welcoming all regardless of age, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status. Due to its natural terrain limitations and distance from available parking facilities, Korinji Monastery is not currently able to accommodate residents or guests using wheelchairs or those unable to navigate steep slopes and stairways

Annual Schedule

Monastic training at Korinji is divided into two cloistered angō training periods. In between these are two less formal periods of practice called seikan.

Summer Training Period (Ge-angō) runs from April 1 to July 15.

Seikan runs from July 16 to September 30.

Winter Training Period (Setsu-angō) runs from October 1 to January 15.

Seikan runs from January 16 to March 31.

Daily Schedule

During each angō there are three 7-day Dai-Sesshin, totaling six annually. Other events are also conducted frequently. Attendance at all monastery events and functions is included, and mandatory, for monastery residents.

During ango, trainees may not leave the monastery grounds without permission. According to the traditional rule, valid reasons for withdrawing from ango once it has begun are limited to serious illness or the death of one's family members or teacher. During seikan months, most of the day is left unstructured for monastery tasks as well as personal study or practice. With permission, residents may leave the monastery during seikan to visit their families or take care of other personal obligations. Note that during seikan the Roshi may also be present less frequently, as much of his travel is scheduled for these months.

One day per week during both ango and seikan, residents may attend to personal needs such as laundry, errands in town, and so on. On that day they may also access the monastery wifi to keep up with personal correspondence.

Approximate daily schedules are shown below:

ANGO during NON-SESSHIN WEEKS

- 4:30 am: Kaijo (wake).
- 4:50: Baito Sarei/Daza (tea/meditation...kaihan struck when morning light indicates).
- 6:00: Dokusan (interview with the Roshi).
- 6:30: Choka (morning ceremony).
- 7:15: Shukuza (breakfast).
- 8:00: Nitten soji (daily cleaning).
- 9:00: Self-guided practice.
- 11:00: Saiza (lunch), then short break.
- 1:00pm: Afternoon meeting, then samu (outside work).
- 3:30: Kaiyoku (shower/bath).
- 4:15 Daza (meditation).
- 4:45: Yakuseki (dinner), then short break.
- 6:30: Daza (meditation).
- 7:00: Kaihan/Daza (striking of the han/meditation).
- 8:00: Sarei/Kaihan/Kaichin (tea/striking of the han/formal lights out). Afterward, yaza (night sitting practice) or study, 9-10pm.
- By 10:30pm: Sleep or continue practice or study.

ANGO during DAI-SESSHIN WEEKS

- 4:30am Kaijo (wake up)
- 4:50 Baito Sarei/Daza (umeboshi tea/zazen)
- 6:00 Dokusan (interview with the Roshi)
- 6:30 Choka (morning chanting)
- 7:15 Shukuza (morning meal)
- 8:00 Samu (work period, indoor and outdoor)
- 10:00 Daza (zazen) • 11:00 Saiza (mid-day meal)

- 12:00pm Suiza (free sitting) • 1:00 Sarei/Daza (tea/zazen)
- 2:30 Dokusan (interview with the Roshi) • 3:00 Kaiyoku (wash)
- 4:15 Daza (zazen)
- 4:45 Yakuseki (evening meal)
- 6:30 Daza (zazen)
- 7:00 Kaihan/Kentan/Daza (striking the han/zendo inspection by the Roshi/zazen)
- 8:00 Dokusan (interview with the Roshi)
- 8:30 Teisho (lecture)
- 9:00 Daza (zazen)
- 10:00 Sarei/Kaihan/Kaichin (tea/striking the han/formal lights out) Afterward, optional snack available in dining hall followed by mandatory yaza (solitary sitting practice) only, 10:30-11:45pm.
- 12:00am: Sleep or continue practice.

SEIKAN

- 5:00 am: Kaijo (wake).
- 5:20: Baito Sarei/Daza (tea/meditation in zendo...kaihan when morning light indicates).
- 6:45: Choka (morning ceremony).
- 7:30: Shukuza (breakfast).
- 8:15: Nitten soji (daily cleaning).
- [schedule flexible according to need].
- 11:00: Saiza (lunch, informal).
- [schedule flexible according to need].
- 4:45pm: Yakuseki (dinner, informal).
- [schedule flexible according to need].
- 7:00: Daza (meditation).
- 8:30: Kaichin (formal lights out). Afterward, yaza or study as desired.

Monastic Life: A Few More Points Regarding What to Expect

1. Zen monastic life is a type of intensive Buddhist retreat. It is marked by a spirit of mutual support, communal unity, and wholehearted effort. The abbot is the final arbiter of all aspects of life at the monastery.
2. The environment here is not one in which individual desires and comforts are acknowledged. Egoistic attachment is constantly challenged. One's past history or trauma are neither our focus, nor something about which anyone will be judged (note that the monastery is not a substitute for psychotherapeutic or psychiatric treatment). In order to succeed at Korinji, one must be able to harmonize with the practice schedule, the environment, and the people, rather than expect that one's self-defined needs and limitations will be catered to by others. In fact, it may be said that a purpose of Zen practice is to shatter preconceptions we all have about ourselves, our needs, and especially our limitations.
3. Visitors and residents at the monastery must as a minimum observe the five lay Buddhist precepts against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and use of intoxicants. Romantic display, use of alcohol or

recreational drugs, and possession of weapons by trainees are not appropriate for trainees (infrequent exception: limited consumption of alcohol like sake can figure in some annual events, but this is optional for residents). Please note that expression of romantic or other personal interest in the teacher (beyond the boundaries of practice relationship) is grounds for removal from residency.

4. One's best effort and total energetic commitment are expected in all activities, and residents may expect to be corrected frequently. The ability to take such instruction from others is crucial, even when it may be sharp in tone or seemingly given without regard for one's feelings. Insubordination toward the abbot or senior students, or disrespectful behavior toward other residents, is not tolerated.

5. We do not differentiate here between "work" and "free time." There is only practice at Korinji. The time allotted for sleep is less than that to which many people are accustomed.

6. The general rule for residential training is that one should use all situations—even difficult ones—to refine oneself. In normal society people often react to difficult situations by blaming the environment or others. Our way is different: when a situation seems difficult, we look to see what we ourselves lack, and how we can use that situation to grow stronger.

7. Korinji sits within 17 acres of beautiful forested ravines, surrounded by farmland. It is very quiet here, and we value our participation in the rhythm of the seasons. This also means that we live with the elements. When it is hot, we are sometimes hot. When it is cold, we are sometimes cold.

8. Part of our activity is cutting wood for heat, growing vegetables to eat, shoveling snow, and other such tasks. Residents are expected to participate in physical labor of various kinds.

9. Modern conveniences, including entertainment, are largely lacking here.

10. Because our resident population varies in number, please be aware that there may be periods of time when you are practicing alone, and may need to prepare your own meals using food provided.

11. Above all, Korinji is a place dedicated to Buddhist practice. In the end, there is nothing else to find here except practice. All other concerns, relationships, and activities should be set aside during the period of residency.

What to Bring

This is not a comprehensive list, but details the most important items:

1. At least 2 sets of formal practice garments (gi, juban, obi and hakama for laypersons, robes for ordained) are the norm at Korinji. To obtain lay practice garments, please check online with sites offering laido uniforms, as these are identical. Please get all garments in black, except juban which are white.

2. White tabi socks: these are worn during the morning and other ceremonies. Slip-on style, rather than formal style with kohaze (metal fastening tabs) are fine.

3. Outdoor sandals or shoes that can be quickly slipped on and off, for walking between buildings.
4. Clothes and footwear appropriate for outdoor work, including one blue zip-up coveralls for physical work periods. Traditional Japanese monastic work clothes (samue) are also good to have for less dirty work and casual wear.
5. Warm clothing and extra layers (long underwear, hat, rain jacket, etc.). Wisconsin becomes quite cold in the winter.
6. Toiletries, personal medications.
7. Flashlight or headlamp for getting around the grounds at night.
8. Rinzai Zen jihatsu (Zen eating bowl set) if owned. If not, these will be available to borrow.
9. For students engaged in koan practice: related texts if owned. If not, these are available in the monastery library.

Do not bring:

1. Weapons.
2. Intoxicants: alcohol or drugs.
3. Computers (you may bring a phone, but it must remain off and stored away while on the monastery grounds, and there is no reliable mobile coverage at Korinji. You may have time one day a week to check email using the monastery wifi).

Donations

Korinji survives solely through contributions to the Korinji Foundation, a non-profit charity. The following suggested donations for residency during one's first ango help us to provide food, pay our expenses, maintain the monastery buildings, and continue our life of practice. We are grateful to all our donors.

After successfully completing a first ango, no donation is required for continued residency. In some cases, Korinji may elect to give a small stipend to residents who demonstrate competency and commitment.

NOTE: No one will be disqualified from residency solely for financial reasons. If you are not able to donate the amounts below, please discuss your situation with us and let us know what is possible for you. As mentioned, it may also be possible for residents to leave the grounds to work, or to leave the monastery entirely during parts of the year to do so.

Regardless of donation, residents are required to maintain their own health insurance coverage, and are responsible for their own medical and dental expenses.

Full Ango (3.5 months total, including three dai-sesshin and other events): \$2500

Single month stay: \$900

One week guest: \$250

Shorter guest stay, per day: \$40

To Apply For Residency at Korinji

Please email to info@korinji.org. We will send you an application form.

If you are interested in applying to train for Zen ordination, please also read that information doc on our website.