



## KORINJI RINZAI ZEN MONASTERY

臨濟宗 • 祖的山光林禪寺

### Residence 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 a rigorous daily schedule including *zazen* (meditation), *sanzen* (individual encounters with the Zen master) *okyo* (chanting/ceremony), *samu* (physical work), internal energetic cultivation practices, and study. Periods of *sesshin* (intensive meditation practice) are frequent. Other practices, including complementary disciplines such as fine arts or physical culture (martial arts), may be undertaken according to each student's needs and interests. Korinji is also a Shugendo training center, and so that additional practice may be available to interested persons.

In such a situation of total immersion and constant contact with teachers and fellow practitioners, all the activities of one's day are more easily done with full concentration, "in one breath". It is a life lived completely 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

Some of the persons residing here 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.

*Please read the following information carefully before emailing to inquire.*

#### 1. Motivation, Eligibility, and Application

A Rinzai Zen training monastery is not a place to go for spiritual tourism, or out of romantic idealism: it is a difficult training environment designed for those whose fundamental questioning regarding life and death is all-consuming. Our model in this is the Buddha, who found he had no choice but to leave behind his family 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 our extended Korinji Rinzai Zen Community - is very reasonable to do).

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 - *ango* - or longer. Shorter stays as a guest are also possible, however, with less restriction.

1. Korinji is a *senmon dojo*—a formal training monastery— and so the rigor of residential practice here is not usually appropriate for Zen beginners. Applicants for residence should 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 and minimal sleep time are features of life here. *Mental and emotional stability and resilience, and reasonably good health including the ability to perform physical work, are required for this training.*

2. Prospective applicants for long-term residence should first complete a *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) may be required before you can be accepted.

3. 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 in unmoving supplication) and *tangaryo* (several days of solitary, constant meditation practice while being observed) will without exception be required upon arrival for all persons intending long-term stay, and especially those who wish to train for ordination.

4. After successfully completing these entrance tests, a one-month probationary period begins during which the applicant is expected to demonstrate an 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 residence is desirable.

5. If accepted for further residence, the applicant may then continue to stay at Korinji until the completion of whatever *ango* (formal training period - see below) is in progress, or will begin next.

6. At the end of each *ango* all residents undergo a review to determine if they will continue to reside at Korinji.

7. Persons wishing to train for Zen ordination at Korinji must generally complete at least one full year of training in the monastery. The maximum total stay for all residents is three years, unless special permission to stay longer is granted.

**NOTE:** One non-traditional aspect of life at Korinji is that we do not differentiate 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 privacy for changing and bath/toilet), and are treated the same. 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*

## 2. Annual Schedule

Monastic training at Korinji is divided into two cloistered training periods called *ango*, each of approximately 3.5 months in length. In between these are two less formal periods of practice called *seikan*.

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

**Seikan** runs from July 16 to September 30.

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

**Seikan** runs from January 16 to March 31.

## 3. Daily Schedule

During *ango* periods there is one 7-day *dai-sesshin* each month, totaling eight a year. The weeks before and after each *dai-sesshin* are called *sho-sesshin*; these are essentially also *sesshin*, but slightly less rigorous in schedule. The fourth week each month is something of a break, with about four hours of *zazen* practice each day. 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 death of one's family members or teacher.

During *seikan* months there is minimal *zazen* each day, about 2.5 hours. Most of the day is left unstructured for monastery tasks as well as personal study or practice. 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.

Approximate daily schedules for the various weeks are shown below:

### **ANGO during DAI-SESSHIN (intensive meditation retreat weeks, conducted 8 times a year)**

- 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.

### **ANGO during SHO-SESSHIN (the weeks before and after Dai-Sesshin)**

- 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/Kentan/Daza (striking of the han/inspection by the Roshi/meditation). Periodically also dokusan.
- 8:30: Sarei/Kaihan/Kaichin (tea/striking of the han/formal lights out). Afterward, optional snack in the dining room followed by yaza (night sitting practice), 9-10:30pm.
- By 11pm: Sleep or continue practice.

### **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, optional snack available in the dining room followed by yaza (night sitting practice) or study, 9-10pm.
- By 10:30pm: Sleep or continue practice or study.

## **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.

## **4. Monastic Life: A Few Points Regarding What to Expect**

- Zen monastic life is a type of intensive, long-term Buddhist retreat. It is marked by a spirit of mutual support, communal unity, and tireless effort. The abbot is the final arbiter of all aspects of life at the monastery.
- The environment here is not one in which individual desires and comforts are much acknowledged. Egoistic attachment is continually challenged. Your past history or trauma are neither our focus nor something about which you will be judged (please understand that the monastery is not a substitute for psychotherapeutic treatment). In order to succeed at Korinji you must be able to harmonize with the practice schedule, the environment, and the people, rather than expect that 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.
- 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).
- 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 is not tolerated.
- We do not differentiate here between "work" and "free time." There is only practice. The time allotted for sleep is less than that to which many people are accustomed.

- 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 the situation to grow stronger.
- 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.
- Part of our activity is cutting wood for heat, growing vegetables to eat, shoveling snow, and other such tasks. You will be expected to participate in physical labor of all kinds, with allowances made when possible for your physical condition.
- Modern conveniences, including entertainment, are largely lacking here. You will not have daily access to (or time for) the internet here. Mobile phones, personal computers, and other such devices are not permitted. You will be permitted to keep up with periodic correspondence using the monastery computer.
- Above all, Korinji is a place dedicated to Buddhist practice. Again, there is no reason to come here unless that is your priority. All other concerns, relationships, and activities should be set aside during the time you are here. If you can do this, and devote yourself to practice with all your energy, then you will be able to realize a great freedom within this life.

## 5. Offerings

Korinji survives solely through contributions to the Korinji Foundation, a non-profit charity. The following minimum offerings for residence 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.

**Summer or winter ango (3.5 months):** \$2500.

**Seikan (2.5 months):** \$900.

**Single month stay during ango:** \$800.

**Single month stay during seikan:** \$500

**Note:** No one will be disqualified from residence solely for financial reasons. If you are not able to donate the amounts above, please let us know what you can do. 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. Please discuss your situation with us.

## 6. To Apply For Residence at Korinji:

Please email to [info@korinji.org](mailto:info@korinji.org). We will send you an application form for either dai-sesshin or residence, whichever is appropriate.

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