



TARA MANḌALA

Buddhist Retreat Center



Retreat Cabin Handbook



Karuna Cabin

OVERVIEW

We are delighted that you are planning to attend a personal retreat at Tara Mandala. Retreat cabins provide a rare and precious opportunity to be completely secluded and alone in a remote mountain setting. Here you are free to maintain intensive practice and connect with your innermost being. The retreat cabins have been created through the loving kindness, generosity, and hard labor of many people.

Currently we have three cabins: Karuna, Ratna, and Luminous Peak, in addition to one small airstream trailer: Mitakpa. All our cabins are well suited for year-round practice, as they are completely insulated and have a small wood-burning stove for which we provide wood; the trailer is available spring-fall. The cabins and trailer are clean and empty. There is no telephone and limited or no electricity. There is a single bed, pillow, blankets, water catchment (cabins only), kitchen with gas stove and small solar shower bag. In addition, a meditation mat and cushion, oil lanterns and altar space are provided. Remember that our facilities are rustic and most cabins do not have an outhouse.

You must provide your own food, bedding (sheets and pillowcase) and practice materials. In winter, it is essential in the mountain climate to bring warm outdoor clothes. You may also want to bring cross-country skis or snowshoes in case of heavy snowfall, as well as for exploration of the land.

No smoking, drugs or intoxicants are allowed at the cabins.

ABOUT TARA MANDALA

Founded by Lama Tsultrim Allione and David Petit in 1993, Tara Mandala was created to foster spiritual and ecological awareness. It is a place for those who wish to explore and stabilize profound states of meditation in short or extended retreats in hermitage cabins that offer panoramic views as well as solitude and sanctuary. We also offer group retreats in Buddhism and other innate wisdom traditions.

In a chaotic and stressful world, Tara Mandala offers refuge and renewal. The experience of retreat in nature brings the gift of peace to the individual and ultimately those practicing deep meditation in retreat affects the fabric of the world.

Tara Mandala was inspired by the vision of a Western retreat center that Lama Tsultrim had while living in the Himalayas as a Buddhist nun in the early 1970's. She felt the need to create a space for the reemergence of the sacred feminine and for people to go deeply into meditative practice through long and short term retreat. Lama Tsultrim believes that people reaching deep levels of meditative awareness have a profound effect on humanity.

While the West developed its advanced outer technology, the Tibetans were developing inner technology. Tara Mandala was established to foster the development of this inner wisdom for the benefit of all beings, much like retreat centers in Tibet.

Tara is a female Buddha of compassion who represents both profound meditative experience and active engagement in the world. Symbolically, the mandala is a kind of architecture of the awakened psyche. To experience the phenomenal world as an integrated mandala of compassion is Tara Mandala.

“If a person goes in search of a silent and tranquil place, and applies the practice, their qualities will without doubt become infinite. Someone who directs themselves in such a direction will accumulate a benefit far superior to that of the one who makes offerings to the Buddhas as numerous as sand of the river Ganges.”

-Moon Torch Sutra



Tara Mandala Stupa

RESERVATIONS

Cost:	2 nights (minimum stay).....	\$60/night
	3-5 nights	\$40/night
	6 nights or more (one week)	\$210 (\$35/night)
	one month	\$600 (\$20/night)

In order to register for a private retreat, please complete the registration form (available online and from the registrar) and return to Tara Mandala along with the required deposit to hold your space.

For retreats of less than one month in length, a deposit equal to half of your total retreat fee is due at the time of registration to hold your place. For retreats of longer than one month in length, a deposit equal to 30% of your total retreat fee is due at the time of registration to hold your place. The balance is due ten days before the start of your retreat.

Cancellations received at least two months prior to retreat start date receive a refund of the deposit minus a \$25 fee. Cancellations received between one and two months prior to retreat start date receive a refund of 50% of their deposit. No refunds of the deposit can be made for cancellations received less than one month prior to retreat start date.

ARRIVAL

Check-in time is between 2:00 – 4:00 pm. The Tara Mandala retreat coordinator will greet you on your arrival, and escort you to the retreat cabin for orientation. The long dirt driveways that lead to the cabins require a vehicle with high clearance and four wheel drive; if you do not have such a vehicle, we will shuttle you (weather permitting) to your cabin.

The driveways into the cabins are rough and unfinished dirt roads that range in length from 1/4 to 1/2 mile. This means that the driveways are not passable by car during snow cover, but also means that they can not be driven during or directly following a rain storm, as the mud is very slick. Depending on unpredictable weather conditions, you may be required to hike your gear into the cabin. In case of severe rain, you may be required to delay your check-in, in which case we will house you overnight in our residence hall (if space permits) or assist you in finding lodging in town.

PREPARATION

Preparation for a solitary retreat is essential. This can include mental, social and practical details. It is helpful to schedule a portion of the beginning and end of your retreat for transition time. Because you are totally secluded, it is important to have everything you need before beginning. Let those close to you know you will be out of touch, but emergency messages can be delivered by Tara Mandala staff. We do not recommend a retreat of more than one week if you have not done retreat before.

PACKING LIST

Provided items:

Extra blankets, pillows, meditation mat and cushion, altar table, lantern and oil, kitchenware including pots and pans, propane stove, small first aid kit, cleaning supplies, drinking water, ax, matches, shovels.

Suggested personal items:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Twin sheets and pillowcase | <input type="checkbox"/> Layered clothing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comforter, blankets or sleeping bag | <input type="checkbox"/> Boots and slippers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sturdy hiking boots | <input type="checkbox"/> Rain/snow gear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Candles (votive or pillar) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight and extra batteries | <input type="checkbox"/> Bath and dish towels |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Backpack | <input type="checkbox"/> Incense |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cash for groceries (if necessary) | <input type="checkbox"/> Camera |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toiletries including biodegradable soap | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses (even in winter) | |

Food:

Please bring enough food to last you one week. If you are in for a long retreat, it is helpful to bring as many non-perishable food as possible with you. Generally, camping food that is lightweight, non-perishable, and easy to prepare is ideal. If you are in the cabin for a week or less, you should not need shopping. If your retreat is longer than one week, a shopping service is provided at no additional cost, and a shopping schedule will be arranged when you arrive. Usually we will pick up your shopping list on a Tuesday and bring your groceries in on a Thursday. Cash must be provided to pay for supplies. Please keep in mind that there is no refrigeration, only a medium sized cooler. You must bring ice (we recommend two blocks of ice in the summer) if you need refrigeration – we will restock your ice supply on weekly shopping trips. Do not leave food outside because of animals.

Fasting is generally discouraged. If you do intend to fast during any part of your retreat, please note this on your intention form.

Suggested Food Items:

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------------|
| • Dried fruit | • Crackers | • Nut butters |
| • Oil/vinegar | • Jam | • Pasta |
| • Granola/oats | • Butter/ghee | • Spices |
| • Coffee/tea | • Nuts/seeds | • Canned or dried soup |
| • Dehydrated food | • Ice block | • Jam |
| • Sweetener | • Whole grains (rice, quinoa, oats) | |
| • Cookies/chocolate | • Long lasting fresh fruit and vegetables | |
| • Rice/soy milk (especially handy in snack pack size) | | |
| • Canned or condensed milk | | |

KITCHEN

Every cabin has slightly different cooking facilities. Karuna and Ratna both have a four burner gas stove and oven, large sink (Karuna's drain water must be carried outside), and a variety of cooking and cleaning supplies. A medium sized cooler is provided for refrigerating perishables. In the winter this is as easy as filling zip-lock bags with snow. During the rest of the year, ice blocks must be hauled in.

Luminous Peak and Mitakpa have a two burner gas stove and a variety of cooking and cleaning supplies, as well as a medium sized cooler.

ALTITUDE

All of our cabins are located between 7500 - 8000 feet elevation. If you live near sea level, please expect to take 3-5 days to acclimate to the altitude. During this time you may have less energy than usual or experience headaches or body ache. We recommend drinking at least twice as much water as you are used to and taking extra rest as needed.

WINTER REALITIES

During the winter months when there is snow covering the ground it is necessary to hike your gear in to the cabin from the main road: approximately 1/4 - 1/2 mile, sometimes uphill. This hike may be strenuous for those coming from sea level or those with a lack of physical fitness. Often, snow shoes are necessary. If you have snow shoes, please bring them. If you don't, please let us know. Call the office to check on current weather conditions. Pack accordingly; a large backpack is preferable to a suitcase. A sled is also available to haul gear and belongings; closed containers that can be bungeed down is ideal.

DURING YOUR RETREAT

If this is your first private retreat at Tara Mandala, a support staff will check in with you personally on the second or third day of your retreat. After that, written communication will be checked for once a week throughout your stay. If a meditation teacher is available and you would like a teacher to visit you, this may also be arranged. Once you are in the cabin, it is strongly requested that you do not leave the land, but maintain your retreat without visits to town or the office, except in an emergency. In the same way, in order to preserve the quality of silence, it is strongly requested that you do not use a cell phone, or play audio with the exception of practice materials you may be using.

Wood Heat

If you're not familiar with using a wood stove, be sure to ask for instructions on how to keep the stove warm and safe. Wood and an axe will be provided; you may need to make your own kindling. General guidelines

include using a lighter wood such as pine for kindling and to get the fire started. You can also collect dead twigs and branches for kindling. After a base of coals have been established, oak may be introduced. Newspaper and plain paper make excellent firestarter. Burning cardboard, colored paperboard (cereal box material), or colored paper is not recommended. When burned, colored inks release toxins. Detailed instructions and a troubleshooting guide to fire building are in the cabins.

Water

All cabins have water catchment systems, (Mitakpa trailer does not). This water can be used for washing but not for drinking. Drinking water will be in the cabin when you arrive and can be refilled on weekly shopping runs. Tara Mandala provides filtered drinking water from the land, which nonetheless has a high mineral content. You may bring bottled water if you prefer.

Bathing

The solar shower has directions written on it. Fill the bag with water and leave it out in the sun to warm up. You can then hang the bag from a tree or overhang. Test the temperature before getting under it, as it can get very hot.

Outhouse

All of our retreat cabins have a private outhouse.

Recycling

Pagosa Springs has limited recycling. We recycle plastic that is labeled #1 or #2, all glass, tin, aluminum, and corrugated cardboard. Most paper and magazines are also recyclable, not including paperboard (cereal box material), telephone books, waxed paper, paper towels, tissues, paper plates/cups, and dark or fluorescent paper. Pagosa also does not recycle plastic bags. Place recycling in sorted bins in our trash room when you leave. We encourage you to limit your trash output as much as possible, and take any materials Pagosa Springs can not recycle home with you if your local recycling program is more inclusive.

Keep in Mind

What to remember while on retreat:

- Keep garbage can firmly closed and indoors at all times
- Do not leave food lying around outside (even scraps) to keep from encouraging rodents, bears, etc.
- Do not leave shower bag hanging with water unless you are using it
- Never leave candles unattended
- Do not leave mattresses outside in case of sudden storms

Small animals and insects

Love them, they are sentient beings. The cabin is tight and little creatures can't get in. If by chance a bird, mouse, or squirrel does get in, just open the doors and windows. By dusk it is sure to find its way out; animals move towards light and fresh air in the evening. Insects (flies in particular) do this as well. Insects like wasps that you'd rather get rid of immediately, can be caught in a drinking glass against a window. Slide a piece of paper under the glass and carry it out.

Snakes and other wild animals like bears and lions

Remember, they will only engage with you if they feel threatened. They will not come into the cabin. Wear boots if you walk off the trail. If you're lucky enough to see one, don't go near a snake or bear etc. Stand still, back off slowly and send it away with blessings.

Bears in particular have been more active in our area due to unusual weather patterns and a long drought. If a bear comes looking for food near your cabin, you can encourage it to leave by creating a loud noise such as an air horn or whistle, both of which are in the cabins. If you are hiking, it is a good idea to make noise while you are hiking by clapping or hollering along the way. If you do see a bear, back away slowly. Do not turn and run, as it can be perceived as threatening.

Electricity

Karuna and Mitakpa do not have solar electricity. Ratna and Luminous Peak both have limited solar electricity. This is adequate for powering a laptop or charging an mp3 player, but high wattage appliances will not work.

Spiritual Guidance

If you would like an interview (private meeting) with Lama Tsultrim while you are on retreat, please request this at the time of your reservation. Lama Tsultrim is not always on the land and available for interviews.

Weather

Tara Mandala is located in the foothills of the San Juan mountains at 7500 - 8000 feet. The weather year round varies tremendously. We recommend checking a weather website (look for a trip planner) to discover weather patterns for the time you are retreating. The coldest months of the year are December and January, with highs in the 10's - 30's and lows below zero. Snow cover is typical December - mid-March, and large storms of up to 3 feet of snow are not unheard of. We have over 300 sunny days per year. Summer months are warm, with highs in the 80's and lows in the 50's. Afternoon rain storms are common in August and September.

Emergencies

In case of emergency, you may use the phone in the upstairs office of the main building to dial 911. Pagosa Springs has EMT, ambulance and air lift services. The nearest fully equipped hospital is Pagosa Mountain Hospital, located in Pagosa Springs, about a 30 minute drive from the cabin.

Pagosa Mountain Hospital: (970) 731-9575

26 S. Pagosa Road

Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

Directions from Tara Mandala: Turn right out of Tara Mandala Driveway and follow 3.8 miles to Trujillo (T junction). Gate code is 3933. Turn left on Trujillo and follow approximately 5 miles. Turn left onto Cascade for 1/2 mile and then turn right at the T onto S. Pagosa (unmarked). Follow S. Pagosa to Rt. 160 (traffic light). The hospital is the second driveway on your left, before you get to the light.

Non-emergency health care

Pagosa Family Medicine: (970) 731-4131

75 South Pagosa Boulevard

Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

Directions: Same directions as to hospital. Pagosa Family Medicine is one building further on the left.

Dr. James Pruitt is available by appointment in Pagosa Springs for minor incidents during business hours: 8 am – 5 pm M-F. Minor emergencies can walk in if they first call to inform the office they are coming.

If you would like to give an emergency phone number to friends or family, please use (970) 731-3711, x101. This line is checked regularly M-F.

INDIVIDUAL CABIN DESCRIPTIONS

Karuna Cabin

Karuna is our newest cabin nestled into the south side of our northern most east-west ridge on the land. This 200 square foot wood cabin has sweeping mountain views with Ekajati Peak and the Tara Shrine in the foreground. Large windows provide a light-filled space during the day and the excellent insulation and high quality Jøtul wood stove provide for warm nights even in the deep winter. The wraparound, hardwood deck is a great place for yoga or meditation, and a covered portion protects firewood. Inside, the cabin holds a twin bed, altar and altar table, and kitchen. A water catchment provides washing water year round. Wildlife abounds. Secluded and serene, Karuna facilitates inner stillness and is an ideal retreat location.

Ratna Cabin

Ratna, our largest and most remote cabin, faces south into the 'secret valley'. The spaciousness of the view is matched with the roominess of the interior of the cabin. There are large windows on three walls, featuring sweeping views of the South and West. About 350 square feet, there is plenty of room inside for yoga, tai chi, and other movement meditations. There is a choice of meditation seats at a full length window looking out over the valley (perfect for mornings or just after sunset), or facing the altar. There is a fully functional rain catchment system which provides washing water, a sink which drains to the outside, a twin bed, kitchen with four burner stove and oven, limited solar electricity, and large wood stove which heats the cabin easily even during the cold winter. The cabin is notable for the unparalleled silence and solitude, far removed from the world. Access to Ratna necessitates a 1/2 mile walk downhill.

Luminous Peak Cabin

Luminous Peak is our smallest cabin, around 150 square feet, with the most vast and open views. The stunning vast view facing south and west features incredible sunsets over the distant ridges in New Mexico. Chimney Rock, a sacred Native American site is visible 20 miles away, and the La Plata mountains 60 miles away can be seen on clear days. Luminous Peak has a twin bed, water catchment, limited solar electricity, a two burner propane stove, a hardwood deck, and an outhouse. Cozy and serene, Luminous Peak is an extremely supportive practice and retreat space.

Mitakpa Trailer

Mitakpa is a small airstream trailer set into the base of a ridgeline in a beautiful and sacred oak grove, and aligned perfectly along an east-west axis. Its simple interior has a twin bed, two burner campstove, and wood stove for heat. Although Mitakpa is available year round, it has minimal insulation, and winter use is recommended for those comfortable with winter camping. Washing and drinking water must be hauled in. Mitakpa is situated a short distance from our private road, and although private, does not have the remote location of our cabins. Because of its limited facilities and smaller space, Mitakpa is available at a reduced rate.

AS YOU DEPART

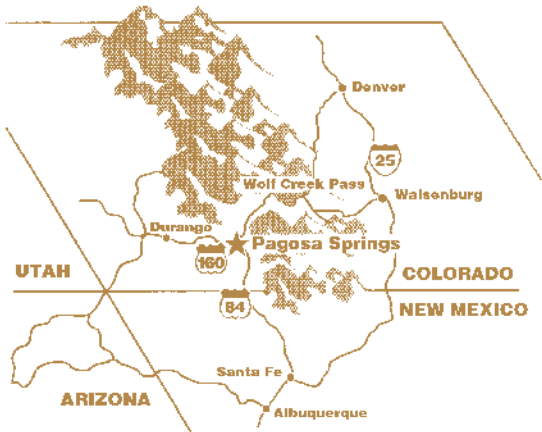
Please review and complete the check-out form before you depart. You will receive this form when you arrive on the land. We welcome your comments and feedback on your retreat experience.

After you finish your retreat you may consider offering a donation to Tara Mandala for the continued maintenance of the retreat cabins and general

support of our mission. Tara Mandala is a non-profit organization, and our lifeblood is the donations of those who are inspired to support us. Please also consider becoming a member of Tara Mandala by joining our Sustaining Sangha. For your monthly donation of any amount, you will receive Words of Wisdom, a weekly email of Tsultrim's favorite quotations from Wisdom Teachers. At \$30/month or more, you will receive discounts (10-20%) on all Tara Mandala sponsored retreats in the U.S. Details are available on our website.



Karuna Cabin Interior



TARA MANĀLA

P.O. Box 3040
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147
www.taramandala.org