

WHAT WE DO HERE

Dhamma Dena is a remote Vipassana Meditation Center spread out over a spacious desert of rough terrain. Here we are exposed to the raw elements (earth, fire, air and water). This allows us to connect with the elements within and all around us. This can be an intense place of inner inquiry that can assist us in waking up. It is not a place of comforts nor relaxation. It is not meant to cater to our desires or preferences. Rather, Dhamma Dena challenges us with the opportunity to confront the joys, sorrows and physical difficulties of our lives. Dhamma Dena is not an escape, but rather a place which teaches us how to meet our lives just as they are with grace and equanimity.

Dhamma Dena is a retreat center that supports and strengthens mindfulness. While we are here, we are the community (sangha) which is the supporting foundation of this center. This center is our spiritual home and is cared for by us. Here, we assist in the daily chores that support the maintenance of our center. In these activities we are strengthening our mindfulness and supporting our community.

While on retreat, we follow the meditation and work schedules as much as our bodies and minds allow. In this way, we directly participate in the teachings (Dhamma) and in the cultivation of mindfulness (Buddha). Our practice may be difficult at times, but if we embrace it with patience and compassion, the truths of our lives can be revealed.

Some powerful teachings at Dhamma Dena have little to do with the teacher. This is why Ruth Denison encourages us to not let a moment go by without noticing. Ruth's style of teaching is one of ongoing Dhamma. Nothing is excluded. Sometimes there are formal evening Dhamma Talks, but often, the teachings are spread throughout the day encompassing all our activities, i.e listening to the meal bell and sensing hunger, washing the floors and noticing our reactions, smelling the outhouse, stepping with the music while chanting in unison with the sangha, lying in bed and noticing the rising and falling of the chest before we fall asleep.

The elements, the rustic center, the Vipassana Meditation practice, the working format and the way of teaching are all here to enhance wakefulness and lessen greed, hatred and delusion. Without expectations and with a commitment to engage fully, we can benefit from this precious opportunity to practice. In this way we can truly embody the teachings within our lives both on and off the cushion and on and off "retreat", wherever we are.

Metta