



How a week of silence can change you

by KIMBERLEY YA (GLOBAL) • 04/23/2016

We've grown accustomed to using words to express our thoughts, emotions, wants and needs. Take that all away and no doubt you'll start to feel a little helpless. This may not sound very appealing to some but get through the initial shock as you're stripped of your words and this may be one of the most eye-opening experiences you'll ever encounter. A silent meditation retreat may be just what you need to find focus and clarity.

Vipassana

One of India's oldest forms of meditation, Vipassana means to see things as they really are. Offering ten-day retreats on St. John's Island, just 6.5km south of Singapore, there isn't much travel involved but you'll feel like you're a world away from home. There is no fee involved, the courses are funded completely on a donation basis by students who have completed the course and wish to help others following in their footsteps. Registration can be done online, where you can also find their course schedules. The ten-day courses are offered several times a year, with a location in Johor, Malaysia as well. Returning students have the option of attending weekly sittings, one or three day courses to advance their practice.

One of the biggest contrasts from everyday life is that someone else will determine your schedule and your meals. Starting very early in the morning and alternating between meditation and meals, your day is pre-planned. Reading or writing materials, mobile phones and laptops are not permitted, giving you plenty of time for reflection, and removing any distractions that may impede your progress. Physical activity is limited to walking in designated areas. Following their rigid agenda and rules, your first impression may reveal that you've joined a cult but trust the experts who have led many through the same path, countless times before.

This silent retreat is a far stretch from the luxurious, relaxing getaway some of us may have in mind but the final outcome will surpass all expectations. As this is a meditation course, that will be your main focus as you're housed in basic accommodation and shared facilities. The course will test you mentally but also physically; sitting in one spot for hours at a time is more of a challenge than it sounds.



We spoke with someone who had undertaken a Vipassana course in Sydney's Blue Mountains, and she had this to say on her ten day experience:

- *Day 0-2* – I was paranoid that I had signed up for a cult and had extreme difficulty sitting on a mat for hours a day. Everything hurt, especially my mind. I was cursing the fact that I had to sit in one place.
- *Day 3-10* – I got into a good rhythm, followed the prescribed 4am-9:30pm schedule pretty closely, my main activities outside of meditation were hand washing laundry, flossing and bird watching. There was no point that I wanted to leave the course, but I did struggle with the meditation sits, as I found it hard having to sit in one place.
- *The best advice I was given* – be brave and don't be hard on yourself
- *Takeaways* – I felt centred, focused, happy and calm for three solid months after the course; I still feel much more calm and feel like a better person in general.

Shreyas Retreat

Itching to get away and explore a new land? Shreyas retreat will take you to Bangalore, India for another unique experience to better your mind in only seven days. With yoga retreat packages available, you'll find a mixture of visitors, not all of whom will be partaking in the silent retreat. Badges are worn by guests requesting others to respect their silence.

Expect a more luxurious surrounding as your dietary preferences and meal times can be catered to your liking. Unlike the above-mentioned course, reading materials are available in the library and guests are encouraged to browse through books to gain a deeper understanding of their practice. A notebook is provided to record thoughts, experiences and revelations during the week of silence. Group yoga classes are incorporated into the silent retreat, along with several choices of massages throughout the stay for a truly relaxing experience. To find out more about this retreat, contact [Flight Centre Active Travel](#) +65 6593 4494 or enquiry@fcactivetravel.com.sg

For any silent meditation retreat, expect to spend a large portion of your time in silence, with time to connect with other guests at the end of course. The silence can be broken in some exceptional circumstances though guests are encouraged to keep communication to a minimum. Everyone will take away something different from the course and gain insights on themselves but the meditation will calm your mind and allow you to reorganise your priorities in life.

www.sg.dhamma.org/

www.shreyasretreat.com/silent-retreat.htm

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