

Guidelines for Driving and Hosting Monastics

DRIVING

We are always looking for volunteers to drive monastics to and from our events. This would usually involve either: picking them up on a Friday at around 5.30 pm from Perth and driving them into Ottawa, driving them back after our Friday evening meditation session at around 9.30 pm, or driving them back after The Day of Mindfulness on a Saturday at around 3.30 pm. Volunteers who drive to Perth on a Friday evening may stay overnight at Tisarana or Sati Saraniya. Occasionally volunteer drivers are needed to help out with non-residential retreats or to drive monks from The Heron Road Temple to OBS events.

It is usual for male volunteers to drive the monks and for female volunteers to drive the nuns. However, if there are two monks or a monk and male attendant travelling together, then a female driver can volunteer. If two nuns or a nun and a female attendant are travelling together, then a male volunteer can drive them.

In these circumstances it is fine for a monk or nun to sit in the front of the vehicle alongside the driver, as long as the seats are separate or bucket-style, with the accompanying monk, nun or attendant seated in the back.

If you are interested in joining the OBS Volunteer Driver Team, please let us know.

HOSTING

If you are interested in hosting a monk or nun on a Friday night after the evening meditation session, during a non-residential retreat or at any other required time, here are some useful guidelines:

Sleeping Arrangements

Provide a comfortable bed in a clean separate room with clean bedding, towel and soap. A separate bathroom is ideal but not necessary.

Food and drink

Breakfast is usually served between 7 and 8 am but ask the monastic before going to bed what time they would like to eat.

The usual breakfast items can be served: oatmeal, cereal, bread or toast, butter, jams or nut butter, fruit, yoghurt, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, eggs, tea and coffee with milk or

cream and sugar or honey. Many monastics are vegetarian so it would be best to ask before offering any meat products. It is fine to make suggestions to the monastic as to what to serve, in order to gauge their preference and appetite.

Evening tea is served between 4 and 6 pm. It may include clear juice, liquorice, candied ginger, boiled candy, gummy bears, cheese, dark chocolate, tea, coffee, sugar or honey and soya milk.

Offering food

Each food or drink item needs to be offered to the monastic. This can be done by offering the item so that he/she can touch it before you place it on the table, or by placing a number of items on a tray and offering the tray in the same manner. For Luang Por Viradhammo and Tan Khemako it is acceptable for the hosts to join them at the table and converse while eating, if they are not eating from their monastic bowls. For other visiting monastics, please ask them what their preference would be. If eating together, it is usual to wait for the monastic to start eating first and not to take any food from the portions that have been offered to them.

General

It is fine to make conversation with the monastic and to ask dhamma-related questions, however it is best to take your cue from the monastic as to what topics of conversation are appropriate and to be aware that they may feel tired, particularly at the end of the day. Sometimes monastics are asked questions which might be delicate for them to answer, so it would be sensitive to generally avoid topics that are too personal, political or controversial.

If they are planning to travel during a meal time it would be good to ask them if they would like a packed meal.

Prefixes

When addressing a monastic, either verbally or through an email, it is preferable to add the appropriate prefix. 'Bhante', 'Tan', or 'Venerable' is fine for monks of all levels of seniority. For monks who have spent ten or more years in robes, 'Ajahn' would be the appropriate prefix. For a substantially senior monk of 40 years or more, 'Luang Por' would be the correct title. When addressing a nun who has taken bhikkhuni ordination 'Ayya' would be the correct title otherwise please refer to her as 'Sister'.

Please let us know if you would like to host a monastic.