

"Fast Like a Penguin"

Health Retreat in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh

January 09 to 19, 2020, Mae Hong Son, Thailand

The theme of this retreat is « Taking Care of Our Body and Mind » by practicing meditation, hiking in nature, relaxation, following an appropriate diet and other to our health beneficial practices. Together we aim to develop our awareness of the interdependence between the food we consume, our body, our mind and the environment we are living in.

Science has rediscovered the ancient practice of fasting which has been already promoted by the Buddha in only taking one meal per day.

Fasting has enormous benefits for our Health as it is a very effective method of detoxification of our organism. Improved elimination of our toxins leads to a rejuvenation of our cells and an increased longevity. It helps our digestive system to relax and the other organs to purge themselves through the elimination of toxins and bad fats. Fasting starts as well to be more and more recognized as a self healing method for certain pathologies, as for reducing chronic pain, inflammation (as for instance rheumatoid arthritis), high blood pressure and as preventive treatment for various sicknesses related to aging, may it be diabetes, cancer or Parkinson disease. Fasting is as well very useful during heavy cancer treatments as chemotherapy.

Fasting and following at the same time a spiritual practice is very beneficial for our physical and mental health. This is the reason why our Master Thich Nhat Hanh recommends us to fast for 10 days once or twice a year (refer to 'Stepping into Freedom').

The collective experience shows that fasting is more easy, pleasant and beneficial when coupled with moderate physical activities as walking/hiking, tai chi, qi gong or yoga.

Fasting for a period of 30 days is normally without any danger for our health but we do recommend you to consult your medical doctor in case you follow a treatment, especially if it is a treatment of your heart, kidney and liver as these organs will have to work a bit harder during the fasting period.

Sangha/Suan Sompou, having as vocation the promotion of the practice of Mindfulness of the Body and the Mind, is going to offer for the first time a fasting retreat and has the intention to continue to do so every year.

We propose you a water fast, Buchinger type, during a period of 6-7 days (up to each participant's personnel choice) between two transition periods of intermittent fasting. Both intermittent and water fast will let us profit from the autophagy, a procedure of renewal and rejuvenation of our cells. (For this discovery Y. Ohsumi received the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2016).

The rhythm of our journey will be marked by spiritual teachings, sitting meditation, total relaxation, silent walking meditation, moderate physical exercises in the nature and other Mindfulness Practices. We will have a sharing circle each day, giving every participant the opportunity to share with the group her/his inner state in the present moment, exchange and to listen and support one another deeply.

Thây Phap Lu, a senior Dharma teacher of the Plum Village Monastery in France, will be our spiritual guide. We will practice during the whole retreat in the Plum Village tradition of our spiritual teacher Thich Nhat Hanh and all participants are invited to participate actively and observe the 5 Mindfulness Trainings.

This retreat is planned to be held in our brandnew Suan Sompou / Sompou Gardens Practice Center.

As the host capacity of our practice center is limited we cannot accept more **than 30 participants**.

Though at least one experienced physical doctor will be present during the whole retreat, Sangha Sompou cannot take responsibility for any medical or other incident happening during the retreat.

Please visit our website www.suansompou.weebly.com to learn more about our activities and other Health Retreats during the winter season 2019-20 and about the creation of Suan Sompou (Sompou Gardens), our future practice center focusing on Health and Mindfulness. Information is presented in Thai and Chinese too.



Retreat program:

09 January, 14:00: Welcome and logistic briefing at Suan Sompou

19 January, 13:00: End of the retreat, back to Mae Hong Son city

Participation criteria:

Participants can be walkers at any level. If necessary several walking groups will be formed.

This retreat will be held bilingual in English and French.

Cost of the retreat: **180 Euro**. This amount includes the support to the transportation costs of Thây Phap Lu and any participating monastic of Plum Village, food and lodging, local transports and local guides from January 09-19.

Whoever is not yet member of the 'Som Pou Association' is invited to add an additional **30 Euro** which does consist of its annual membership fee. Opportunities to practice dana/generosity will be given to the participants.

Registration by email (sanghasompou@pm.me) will open on 15 August 2019. No registration will be accepted before this date. Once accepted, your registration has to be validated by transferring the total participation cost and a proof of your payment, on which your participation will be confirmed.

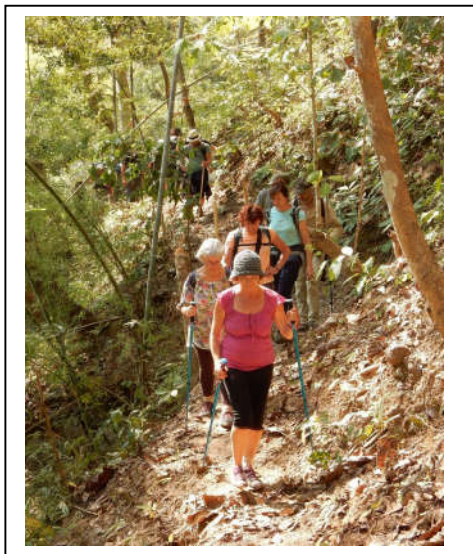
This retreat is organized by Sangha Som Pou and is strictly non-profit oriented. Any possible 'profit' will be reserved for the construction of Suan Sompou (Sompou Gardens) our forthcoming Practice Center.



Necessary equipment:

- Backpack for the transport of your personal items as well as water for the day.
- Thermos or other bottle for the transport of your drinking water for the day.
- Comfortable walking shoes with good, gripping soles will do for this trail. Gore-tex or other water resistant coatings are not necessary.
- Pullover (polar fleece or other) for chilly mornings. During the night, temperatures can drop to below 10°C. Daytime temperatures are around 25°C to 30°C during this period of the year.
- Rain and wind-stopper coat or poncho for the rainy days (extremely rare during this period).
- Sun hat against the subtropical sun.
- Head-or handheld torch.
- A sleeping bag is not necessary, blankets are provided. However consider a sleeping bag sheet.
- Nordic walking poles are recommended and can be rented from our Sangha.
- First aid kit including components to deal with minor casualties (cuts, scrapes, blisters, headaches ...)
- **Very important: good mood, patience and flexibility!**

NOTE: Couples are much invited however due to organizational issues cannot have their own private room.



How to get to Mae Hong Son?

Wisdom Airlines and Bangkok Airways do provide a few flights per day from Chiang Mai. Nok Air (www.nokair.com) provides three times a week a direct flight from Bangkok.

If you are on a tight budget, you can get minivan transportation from Chiang Mai (250 Baht, every 30 minutes, last van leaves 14:30) or take a night bus from Bangkok by 'Sombat Tours' (www.sombattour.com). The buses are very comfortable and include food and non-alcoholic drinks (approx. 800 Baht).

You can take a local Thai taxi ("tuk-tuk") to the hotel of your choice (count 50 to 60 Baht for the trip).

Suggestions concerning accommodation in Mae Hong Son before and after the retreat:

Piya Guesthouse: very nice location, very comfortable for a great price: 700 Baht double room per night

Friend House: very friendly and clean, double room 300 Baht

Little Good Things: outstanding vegan restaurant, not to be missed!

Some tips :

- When paying for air tickets by credit card, travel insurance is often included.
- For more information concerning your visit in Thailand, you will find all you need on the internet or in printed travel guides available in all good book shops.
- **Don't forget to visit our marvelous regional practice center in Thailand (www.thaiplumvillage.org)**

