

"Wake Up and Search for the Song of the Gibbon"

**Itinerant Health Retreat in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh
December 14 to 20, 2024, Mae Hong Son, Thailand**

Set in the magical highlands of northern Thailand, a journey for everybody from 7 to 77 years old to find the beautiful voice we are all looking for

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 as a travelling fellowship, 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. To preserve a healthy body and a clear mind, we have light, vegetarian and organic meals. At the same time we are hiking to help our body tap into accumulated reserves and renew itself during the retreat and while facing the challenges of our route. During the whole retreat, *Thây Pháp Lữ*, a senior Dharma teacher of the Plum Village Monastery in France, will be our spiritual guide.

The rhythm of our journey will be marked by teachings, sitting meditation, walking meditation, mindful eating and other practices that we can apply to our daily lives. 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, and to listen and support one another.

Food and lodging will be provided by Karen mountain tribe families of each village (authentic homestay).

We will practice according to the teachings of our spiritual teacher Thich Nhat Hanh and all participants are invited to participate actively and observe the 5 Mindfulness Trainings.

Please visit our website www.suansompou.weebly.com to learn more about our activities and other Health Retreats during the winter season 2024-25. Of course, all participants are more than welcome to stay and practice at Suan Sompou before and after the retreat. As our host communities on the way have limited host capacity, we **cannot accept more than 20 participants**.

Retreat program:

14 December, 17-18:00: welcome and logistic briefing in Mae Hong Son city, staying overnight at your hotel

15 December, 06:00: start of the retreat in Mae Hong Son city

18 December, Day without hiking. Forest bathing, being together, meeting villagers, workshops...

20 December, 17:30: back in Mae Hong Son city



Daily schedule:

04:45-07:15 Morning practice (prostrations, massage, sitting, Dharma Talk)

08:00-16:30 Hiking meditation, relaxation, eating meditation

18:00-19:30 Evening practice (sitting, dharma sharing, being together)

This retreat will be held bilingual English-French.



Participation criteria:

Participants have to be good walkers (level 4 to 5, see below), used to hiking and comfortable with 5-6 hours walks per day over a period of several consecutive days. All participants will carry their own backpacks during the whole retreat.

Cost of the retreat: **5900 Baht**. This amount includes the transportation costs of Tây Pháp Lữ and any participating monastic of Plum Village, accommodation (food and lodging), transports and local guides from December 15-20. Young participants with financial challenges have the opportunity to submit us a discount proposal.

Whoever is not yet member of the 'Som Pou Association' is invited to add an additional **600 Baht** which does consist of its annual membership fee and will be used for the maintenance and development of our spiritual center Suan Sompou. Opportunities to practice dana/generosity will be given to the participants.

Registration by email (sanghasompou@pm.me) will open on 01 April 2024. 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 Sompou and is strictly non-profit oriented. Any possible 'profit' will be used for the maintenance and development of Suan Sompou (Sompou Gardens) our Practice Center.



Necessary equipment:

- Backpack for the transport of your personal items as well as food and water for the day. We strongly suggest to adapt the weight of your backpack to your respective experience and possibilities. Everybody will carry his own backpack during the whole retreat. As a guideline, the weight of your backpack should not exceed 5 kg.
- 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. We will cross frequently small streams.
- 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 torch.
- Hammock if you fancy one.
- A sleeping bag is not necessary.
- Nordic walking poles are obligatory for this retreat and can be rented from us.
- First aid kit including components to deal with minor casualties (cuts, scrapes, blisters, headaches ...)
- **Very important: good mood, patience and flexibility!**

Walking levels of our Health Retreats

Level 6: outstanding physical condition, familiar with long and difficult mountain treks.

Level 5: very good physical condition, regular sports practice (at least two to three times a week).

Level 4: good physical condition, fit for 5 to 6 hours walking per day in a field with significant height gain.

Level 3: correct physical condition, comfortable with 3 to 4 hours walks per day with moderate height gain.

Level 2: sufficient physical condition, able to walk 2 to 3 hours a day on flat ground.

Level 1: no particular physical condition, able to walk one hour per day on flat ground

Note: The aim of the retreats organized by the Sangha/Suan Som Pou is not to achieve a too high or a too small personal physical challenge. So, we respectfully ask those who wish to participate in one or other of our retreats to take in account the indicated walking skill levels before registration. The organization team declines all liability concerning any form of physical problems that might occur during the retreat, and will not take in charge any repatriation costs to Mae Hong Son.

