

Welcome to Kevala Retreat

*Orientation Manual - Please Take a Moment
to Familiarize Yourself*

Have a Pleasant Stay....

We're Glad You're Here! We are working to create a peaceful, natural, somewhat rustic retreat environment for solo retreatants and occasional small groups who wish to join us in a Dhamma centered life. The 'wheres' and 'hows' are not always obvious so we hope this document helps. Thank you for joining us in the journey for however long you are able. We wish you a peaceful sojourn!

Cost

We operate on a donation basis. There is no set fee for hospitality, accommodations or guidance but your donation allows us to pay for the building and maintenance of the valley and facilities, and to support the caretakers – Santikaro & Jo Marie. The practice of generosity, or “Dana” is an important aspect of Dhamma practice. Please make a contribution that is respectful both of what you have received and of your current means. There is a donation box in the Guest House. Donations of labor & skill are very acceptable forms of reciprocity and generosity as well. We very much appreciate your support.

Guidance

Kevala Retreat provides hospitality for mature practitioners to practice silent personal retreat. For the most part you will be expected to self-direct your retreat. You may make arrangements to meet with Santikaro if he is here, or with Jo Marie, to talk about your practice, how to structure your retreat, and for general spiritual direction. You are welcome to participate in any group meditations or study sessions taking place during your stay. Jo Marie is also available for working with dreams in the context of practice, or to facilitate some time with the horses if you so desire.

Quiet

If you are here for retreat we ask that conversations be kept to a minimum, both to support your retreat and to respect others who may be in silent retreat in and around the buildings. Strict silence is not necessary when navigating shared space, or shared work periods. Quiet practice-related conversations or guidance interviews should take place in a private location to avoid disturbing other retreatants.

What to Bring

- Your own vegetarian food (fridge and dry storage are available).
- Sleeping bag or bedding and pillow if you will be in Creekside Tent (we have sleeping bags to loan if you do not have one).
- Towel and personal toiletries including insect repellent and biodegradable soap and shampoo (we have towels to loan if you forget).
- Outdoor clothing appropriate to the season including rain gear and rugged shoes.
- Flashlight, batteries and alarm clock if needed
- Water bottle

Please DO NOT bring:

- Drugs, alcohol or tobacco products (except prescription drugs and caffeine)
- Computers or I-Pads
- Companion animals (except by special arrangement)
- Radios (musical instruments can be played if they are not disturbing others)

Bedbug Precautions

With the recent global upsurge of bedbug infestations, **we ask that you postpone your visit if you have had a known exposure, or a known treatment of your household in the last 90 days.** We do regular monitoring, and take precautions before and after guests visit and have never had bedbugs on the property. Please help us keep it that way. *If you receive any mysterious insect bites in any of the rooms at night alert a caretaker immediately.*

Invasive Plants

We spend a great deal of time controlling the invasive plants that can be found at Kevala, including Prickly Ash, Thistle, Multiflora and Honey Suckle. Thankfully the Kevala Valley is free of other noxious invasives that trouble many parts of the Midwest, such as Garlic Mustard and Cow Parsnip. We ask that if you have been in other outdoor areas (including your own property) that you scrub your shoes and clean your clothing very well before arriving at Kevala so as not to introduce new species. It is also a good idea to do the same when leaving here, so as not to take our prickly ash or multiflora to your own, or other properties.

Parking

Please drive to the turn-around across from the main building to unload your belongings. You will be instructed where to park for the duration of your stay. Our parking facilities are still limited, and awaiting funds to expand for increased parking and a proper garage.

Property Boundaries & Roads

On the final page is a map of Kevala boundaries. Please don't stray onto neighboring property. The boundary fences are marked in blue. ***All the horse pasture fences have electric wire and the jolt can be quite painful - careful not to touch!***

You are welcome to take walks or bike rides on area roads. There is one road we ask guests to avoid, and it is the triangle shaped road that goes around our north neighbor's property (Kimono). In order to respect their privacy we ask that you stay on the main road (Kendall), and not take the scenic tour around their house.

Intoxicants

We ask that no intoxicants (aside from caffeine and necessary medications) be used while staying at Kevala. Smoking is not allowed on the property. Thank you for your understanding.

Close all Gates and Doors.

If you find a fence gate deliberately secured in the open position, leave it open. Otherwise please close all gates and doors behind you *even if you think you are coming right back.* ***The most important doors to close are the front gates, and inside and around the barn:*** horses will overeat on certain things such as grain in the tack room, or apples in the orchard, resulting in illness or death.

Caretaker's Cabin

The rustic, wood sided cabin west of the guest house is where the caretakers (Santi & Jo) live. Please respect their privacy, but in case of an urgent need you are welcome to knock on the door.

Kitchen

The shared kitchen in the Guest House is available for food storage and cooking. You will be directed where to put food when you arrive. You may be navigating one or more other retreatants during your retreat. If you can bring some pre-prepared foods that just need to be heated up it makes the shared kitchen experience easier.

Laundry & Bathrooms

You will find two full bathrooms with showers and a laundry room on the first floor of the Guest House. When using the laundry, use biodegradable soaps and try to be timely with removing your laundry and allowing others to use the facilities.

Food Storage & Composting

Store all food in the Guest House kitchen and pantry. No food items are allowed in the tent, and only tightly contained snack items in the Forest Hermitage and the Garden Hermitage – the mice, raccoons and skunks quickly identify sources of food and become rather pesky neighbors. Please use the composting pile bins near the garden beds for food scraps. Help yourself to the garden. We ask that a vegetarian diet be observed while visiting Kevala Retreat.

Biodegradable Soaps

Please use only non-toxic and biodegradable soaps for bathing, laundry and dishes. All of your waste water goes directly into the environment and quickly finds its way to the stream and the groundwater. If you are unsure whether your soap is biodegradable ask us for a container of castile soap.

Tent Care

Creekside Tent has an instruction sheet inside - please help us keep it in good shape for a long time to come. Please use your own bedding, or the sleeping bag liners and sleeping bags provided.

Propane Lamps

If you are at all uncertain in using the propane lamps, be sure to ask for a demonstration. They are safe and very useful. *It is very important not to touch the mantle when lighting!* They are fragile and will disintegrate with contact. ***Keep away from tent canvas and fabrics. Put out before falling asleep.*** We also have two rechargeable electric lanterns which you may use instead of propane.

Cell Phones and Computers

You may carry a cell phone if you feel you need it for safety or necessary communication with family, but please refrain from using it for discretionary conversation. Please leave your computer at home or in your car.

Barn and Animals

We have a beloved community of cats and horses. Many of the cats have been feral and may be shy. Some are more eager to interact with people. Ask for help before approaching the horses. They are friendly, but they are big and there are some safety precautions to be observed. Please do not let cats into any buildings – the indoor cats have a home at the caretaker's cottage; the outdoor cats have a home at the barn with a heated shelter. ☺

Bike trail, Kickapoo Valley Reserve, Wildcat, Necedah

If you brought a bike, or if you want to take a break from meditating and go for a hike or canoe, please ask us for more information about how to find the bike trail, the Kickapoo River, or one of several parks and reserves. *Please follow instructions given previously to avoid introducing our invasive species seeds to these areas, and to avoid bringing theirs back here: Scrub and clean boots and clothes carefully before leaving Kevala and before returning.*

Local Clinic/medical care: Scenic Bluffs, Hospitals, Warrens Walk in clinic

If you need medical care, please first let us know (unless it is an emergency). We can direct you to the most appropriate facility. There is a very good community clinic in Norwalk (Scenic Bluffs), two hospitals in the near vicinity (Sparta & Tomah), and a walk in clinic in Warrens, about 25 miles away, with more liberal hours than the one in Norwalk.

Wild Cats & Other Animals

Bobcats are shy but if you are lucky you may see one. We believe there is at least one living in the valley and she has been spotted in the back meadow. (Update: There have been no sightings since 2013).

Cougars have occasionally been seen in the region, but generally try very hard to avoid people. The DNR reports that breeding adults and kittens have not been reported this far south. The solitary adults that have been encountered are thought to be only passing through. If you should encounter a large cat it is important not to run as that can make one look a little like a cat toy. You may walk away quietly, or if the cat shows an interest in you, make yourself as large and noisy as possible. Please tell us if you encounter a cat at Kevala.

Black bears and wolves have been occasionally spotted South of I-90. Neither should bother humans, but please report any sightings. Coyotes are common and are more often heard than seen. Their tracks can be easily followed during the snow season.

Ticks & Lyme disease

Deer ticks live in our area. If you visit Kevala, please be aware of the possibility of contracting Lyme disease, or other tick borne illnesses. Like most of the midwest, the northeast, and increasingly the northwest United States, Lyme disease and other tick born illnesses are endemic here. Encountering ticks is one of our facts of life at Kevala and we are learning to live with nature's creatures and rules.

Fortunately Lyme disease is both preventable & treatable. By following these precautions you can be reasonably certain that you will not contract the disease.

Precautions & prevention

- Wear light colored clothing. Use insect repellent & reapply frequently (we can recommend some non-toxic brands, samples of which can be found in the laundry room).
- Familiarize yourself with what a deer tick looks like. Ask for identification cards if needed
- Check yourself thoroughly -- full body inspection -- twice daily. Have someone check your back, or use the mirrors provided on the bathroom doors. It is thought that ticks must be attached for longer than 24 hours to transmit the spirochete responsible for Lyme disease, but instances of transmission in less time have been reported. Ticks will move around on your body for some time before attaching and the process of attachment is slow. With twice daily checks it is normally possible to find them before embedment.

- Remove embedded ticks with a tick key (hanging in the bathrooms.) Ask for assistance if needed.
- A single dose of doxycycline is thought (but not proven) to be effective in preventing Lyme disease if taken at the time an embedded tick is removed (available locally for those who are certain they do not have allergies to any antibiotics).
- Be mindful of any rash or flu-like symptoms within a month after spending time in the outdoors. Prompt treatment (usually 2- 4 weeks of twice daily antibiotic depending on length of time symptoms have been present) will eradicate Lyme disease and other tick borne illnesses and prevent long term sequelae.

Local Farmer's Markets, Stores & Restaurants

Northwood Country Market - Hiway 16, just west of the intersection with Hiwy 27 in Sparta, South side of the street. Local veggies, some organics, juice, cereals, almond milk, cheese, tea. Excellent coffee and espresso drinks. Closed on Sundays.

IGA Sparta – directly across from Northwood Market, large, standard grocery store. Not much organic.

Troyer Family - 23993 Cty Hwy XU. Take 71 towards Sparta. Take first left on Landmark Ave. Go up the steep hill to the end of Landmark at XU. The Troyer farm will be directly in front of you. They have eggs, jellies and baked goods. Closed on Sundays.

Sparta Farmer's Market - Wed 2-5pm, Sat 8-12am; State Bank parking lot on Water Street. Sometimes not well attended. 5/28 - 10/27.

Tomah Farmer's Market - Wed 4-6pm, Sat 7-1am; Gillett Park on E. Holton; June-Oct.

Onalaska Farmer's Market - Sun 7-1pm; 1260 Crossing Meadows; June - Oct.

LaCrosse Farmer's Market - Wed 8 - sellout; Bridgeview Plaza; June - Oct

Fri 4-8 pm; King St between 4th & 5th; May - Oct

Sat 6-1 pm; between 3rd & 4th & Vine & State; June - Oct

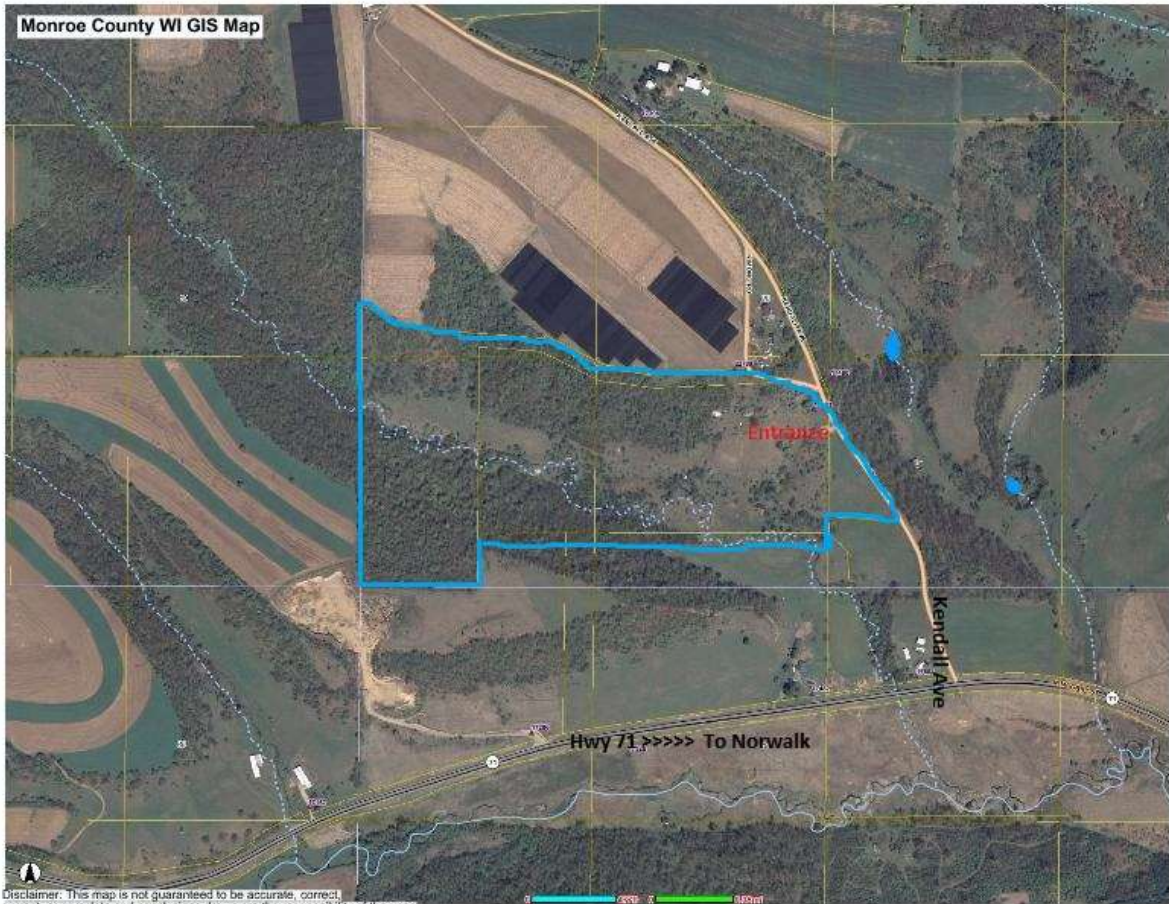
Viroqua and La Crosse both have Co-Ops with a large selection. We are happy to shop for people when we go in to town.

Ginny's on Water Street in Sparta – espresso drinks, baked goods, soups, sandwich & salads.

Please don't hesitate to ask us for information or help.
Thank you for visiting and please enjoy your stay!

Jo Marie Cell Phone: 608-377-2784
Santikaro Cell Phone: 608-780-0481

Monroe County WI GIS Map



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