



KORINJI RINZAI ZEN MONASTERY

臨濟宗・祖的山光林禪寺

Residency at Korinji: Information and Application

Thank you for your interest in residential Zen practice at Korinji. Please read the following carefully.

Korinji is a sōdō, a Rinzai Zen training monastery, not a casual Zen center. The foundation of monastic life here is a rigorous daily schedule of practice including zazen, sanzen, okyō, samu, and other forms of training. Sesshin, periods of intensive meditation retreat, are held frequently.

Residents also undertake complementary disciplines, including fine arts and martial arts, in keeping with the training structure of Zen-Ken-Shō, the unity of Zen, martial arts, and fine arts, inherited from Omori Sōgen Rōshi. Korinji is additionally a non-sectarian center for the practice of several Japanese Buddhist traditions, and such training, for example in Shugendō, is part of our monastery life.

Through total immersion in practice, and through constant contact with teachers and fellow practitioners, all activities are undertaken with full concentration, as if “in one breath.” It is a life lived in the spirit of the words traditionally brushed on the han, the wooden sounding board used to signal events in the monastic day:

生死事大

The matter of birth and death is great.

無常迅速

Impermanence is swift.

時不待人

Time waits for no one.

慎莫放逸

Take care. Do not waste this life.

Monastic life is not easy. It is, however, an extraordinary opportunity to realize the deepest human potentials of wisdom, compassion, discipline, and service. Those who give themselves fully to this training may discover a new way of living. Emerging from the monastery back into the world, the lifelong path of service to others, and to all beings, opens before us.

Motivation, Eligibility, and Application

A Rinzai Zen monastery is not a place for spiritual tourism, romantic idealism, or casual experimentation. It is a demanding environment for those who feel a genuine necessity to confront the fundamental “matter of birth and death, that is, the very essence and meaning of one’s existence.

Our model in this is the Buddha, who found that he had no choice but to leave ordinary life and undertake the path of awakening. Applicants should feel a serious need to plumb the depths of their own existence and to submit themselves to the discipline required for that work. Those who do not yet feel this level of necessity may be better served by participating first in Korinji’s extended lay community, retreats, and non-residential training.

Some residents at Korinji are ordained, and some may be training in preparation for ordination. Ordination, however, is not required for residency. Laypersons are welcome to train here side by side with ordained persons.

The following describes our residency eligibility requirements and the application process. Note that some of these requirements are directed primarily to applicants wishing to stay for extended periods of one 3 month training period - angō - or longer. Shorter stays as a guest are also possible.

1. Korinji is a senmon dojo or sodo, a formal training monastery. Residential practice here is therefore not appropriate for Zen beginners. The training is a traditional monastic apprenticeship, and so unlike the programming found at many other Zen centers. Applicants should already have an established practice, including the ability to engage in at least four hours of zazen daily, sitting still in meditation posture for multiple 30–50 minute periods. During sesshin and other intensive practice periods, residents should expect long hours of meditation, reduced sleep, physical fatigue, and sustained silence.
2. Applicants need not be particularly learned regarding Buddhism. But they should make efforts toward establishing a foundation of study, including familiarity with basic Buddhist and Zen teachings. At a minimum, they should have read books by reputable scholars or teachers offering “Buddhism 101” teachings, for example regarding the life of Shakyamuni, foundational Sravakayana teachings such as the four noble Truths, eightfold path, dependent origination, karma and rebirth, about the major Buddhist traditions, etc.; regarding our Zen path, works such as *The Bodhidharma Anthology*, *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, and Dumoulin’s *Zen Buddhism: A History*; regarding practice, Torei Enji’s *Discourse on the Inexhaustible Lamp* (also published as *The Undying Lamp of Zen*), Omori Roshi’s *Introduction to Zen Training*, and Meido Roshi’s books listed on Korinji’s website.
3. High levels of psychological health, stability, and resilience are absolutely necessary for monastic residency. Sufficient fitness to perform several hours of physical work each day, and to hike in difficult terrain, are requirements.
4. Prospective applicants for long-term residency will usually be asked to first complete at least one Dai-Sesshin (one week meditation retreat) at Korinji or an equivalent training center. Note: if this requirement is

fulfilled elsewhere, but we have not yet met you, an interview (in-person or online) will also be required before you can be accepted.

5. Upon acceptance and confirmation of an arrival date, the applicant may arrive at Korinji. The traditional entrance tests of niwazume (a day or more spent outside, prostrate in unmoving supplication) and tangaryo (several days of solitary, constant meditation practice while being observed) may be required for those intending long term stay.

6. After successfully completing these entrance tests, a one-month probationary period begins during which the applicant should demonstrate the ability to function well in the monastery environment. At the end of this period a review will be conducted with the applicant to determine if further residency is desirable. If accepted for further residency, the applicant may then continue to stay at Korinji for the remainder of that current ango.

7. Once one has been accepted and begun an ango period, the only valid reasons we recognize for withdrawing from the training are genuine cases of personal emergency.

8. At the end of each ango, residents may request to continue residency.

9. Persons wishing to train for Zen ordination at Korinji will generally reside in the monastery for an unbroken period of at least one year. There are exceptions to this. Please see the ordination info doc for more information.

10. While ideally one would be able to practice full-time at Korinji without other obligations, we recognize that this is difficult for many today – especially younger students - due to financial pressures. It is therefore possible to reside at Korinji but to leave the grounds periodically for work. It is also possible during non-ango months to leave the monastery for longer periods of time to work without giving up one's spot as a resident. Please let us know if you wish to discuss this kind of work/study schedule at Korinji.

11. One non-traditional aspect of life at Korinji is that we do not differentiate by sex or gender identity in matters of practice. Residents live and train together, sharing the same communal sleeping space in a barracks style room, though of course with individual privacy for changing, showers, and toilets. All residents are held to the same basic training expectations. Applicants who are not comfortable with mixed-gender communal living and training should not apply.

Korinji is an inclusive community welcoming people regardless of age, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status. Because of the monastery's natural terrain, steep slopes, stairways, and distance from parking, Korinji is not presently able to accommodate residents or guests who use wheelchairs or who cannot safely navigate uneven ground and stairs. Prospective residents with access concerns are welcome to contact us before applying so we can discuss what is realistically possible.

Training Year and Daily Life

Monastic training at Korinji is divided into two cloistered ango training periods each year. Between these are two less formal periods of practice called seikan.

Summer Training Period, Ge-ango, runs from April 15 to July 15.

Seikan runs from July 16 to October 14.

Winter Training Period, Setsu-ango, runs from October 15 to January 15.

Seikan runs from January 16 to April 14.

During each ango there are three seven-day Dai-Sesshin, totaling six Dai-Sesshin annually. Other retreats, ceremonies, work periods, and training events are also conducted throughout the year. Attendance at all monastery events and functions is mandatory for residents.

During ango, trainees may not leave the monastery grounds without permission. According to the traditional rule, valid reasons for withdrawing from ango once it has begun are limited to serious illness or the death of a family member or teacher. Once residents have committed to an ango, they are expected to complete it.

During seikan, most of the day is less formally scheduled and may be used for monastery tasks, personal study, individual practice, and necessary rest. With permission, residents may leave the monastery during seikan to visit family or attend to other personal obligations. Residents should also note that during seikan the Roshi may be present less frequently, since much of his travel is scheduled during these months.

One day per week, during both ango and seikan, residents may attend to personal needs such as laundry, errands in town, and personal correspondence. On that day they may also access the monastery Wi-Fi for necessary communication.

Approximate daily schedules are shown below:

ANGO during NON-SESSHIN WEEKS

- 4:30 am: Kaijo (wake).
- 4:50: Do-in Ho, Baito Sarei, Daza (exercise, tea, meditation; kaihan struck when morning light indicates).
- 6:00: Dokusan (interview with the Roshi).
- 6:30: Choka (morning ceremony).
- 7:15: Shukuza (breakfast).
- 8:00: Nitten soji (daily cleaning).
- 9:00: Self-guided practice.
- 11:00: Saiza (lunch), then short break.
- 12:00pm: Shodo sanpai (walking practice on the monastery grounds).
- 1:00pm: Afternoon meeting, then samu (outside work).
- [3X-week] 3:00pm: Budo/Hojo (martial training)
- 4:00pm: Kaiyoku (shower/bath).
- 4:15 Daza (meditation).
- 4:45: Yakuseki (dinner), then short break.
- 6:30: Daza (meditation).

- 7:00: Kaihan/Daza (striking of the han/meditation).
- 8:00: Sarei/Kaihan/Kaichin (tea/striking of the han/formal lights out). Afterward, yaza (night sitting practice) or study, 9-10pm.
- By 10:30pm: Sleep or continue practice or study.

ANGO during DAI-SESSHIN

- 4:30am Kaijo (wake up)
- 4:50: Do-in Ho, Baito Sarei, Daza (exercise, tea, meditation; kaihan struck when morning light indicates).
- 6:00 Dokusan (interview with the Roshi)
- 6:30 Choka (morning chanting)
- 7:15 Shukuza (morning meal)
- 8:00 Samu (work period, indoor and outdoor)
- 10:00 Daza (zazen)
- 11:00 Saiza (mid-day meal)
- 12:00pm Hojo/Budo, or Shodo Sanpai (martial training, or walking practice on the monastery grounds)
- 1:00 Sarei/Daza (tea/zazen)
- 2:30 Dokusan (interview with the Roshi)
- 3:00 Kaiyoku (wash)
- 4:15 Daza (zazen)
- 4:45 Yakuseki (evening meal)
- 6:30 Daza (zazen)
- 7:00 Kaihan/Kentan/Daza (striking the han/zendo inspection by the Roshi/zazen)
- 8:00 Dokusan (interview with the Roshi)
- 8:30 Teisho (lecture)
- 9:00 Daza (zazen)
- 10:00 Sarei/Kaihan/Kaichin (tea/striking the han/formal lights out) Afterward, optional snack available in dining hall followed by mandatory yaza (solitary sitting practice) only, 10:30-11:45pm.
- 12:00am: Sleep or continue practice.

SEIKAN

- 5:00 am: Kaijo (wake).
- 5:20: Baito Sarei/Daza (tea/meditation in zendo...kaihan when morning light indicates).
- 6:45: Choka (morning ceremony).
- 7:30: Shukuza (breakfast).
- 8:15: Nitten soji (daily cleaning).
- [schedule flexible according to need].
- 11:00: Saiza (lunch, informal).
- [schedule flexible according to need].
- [3X-week] 2:00pm: Hojo/Budo (Hojo kata and martial art training).
- 4:45pm: Yakuseki (dinner, informal).
- [schedule flexible according to need].
- 7:00: Daza (meditation).
- 8:30: Kaichin (formal lights out). Afterward, yaza or study as desired.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Sado (tea ceremony), Shittan/Shabutsu (calligraphy and buddha-drawing), and other classes are conducted periodically. Shugendo, martial art, and other special events are conducted throughout the year. Monastery residents participate in all of these things.

Monastic Life: A Few More Points Regarding What to Expect

1. Zen monastic life is a form of intensive Buddhist training. It is marked by a spirit of mutual support, communal unity, and wholehearted effort. The abbot is the final arbiter of all aspects of life at the monastery.
2. The environment here is not organized around individual preference, comfort, or self-expression. Egoistic attachment is constantly challenged. Personal history, including trauma, is not a basis for judgment here. At the same time, the monastery is not a substitute for psychotherapy, psychiatric treatment, or crisis care. In order to function well at Korinji, one must be able to harmonize with the practice schedule, the environment, and the people, rather than expect one's self-defined needs and limitations to be accommodated by others. Indeed, one purpose of Zen practice is to shatter the preconceptions we have about ourselves, our needs, and especially our limitations.
3. Visitors and residents at the monastery must, at minimum, observe the five lay Buddhist precepts: not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, and not using intoxicants. Romantic display, use of alcohol or recreational drugs, and possession of personal weapons by trainees are not appropriate. Infrequent exceptions to the alcohol rule may occur in the case of limited ceremonial or celebratory use of beverages, such as sake, during annual events. Participation in such use is optional for residents. Please note that expression of romantic or other personal interest in the teacher, beyond the boundaries of the practice relationship, is grounds for removal from residency.
4. One's best effort and total energetic commitment are expected in all activities. Residents should expect to be corrected frequently. The ability to receive instruction from others is crucial, even when such instruction may be sharp in tone or given without attention to one's personal feelings. Insubordination toward the abbot or senior students, or disrespectful behavior toward other residents, is not tolerated.
5. We do not differentiate here between "work" and "free time." At Korinji, there is only practice. The time allotted for sleep is less than that to which many people are accustomed.
6. The general rule for residential training is that one should use all situations, including difficult ones, to refine oneself. In ordinary life, people often react to difficulties by blaming the environment or others. Our way is different: when a situation seems difficult, we look to see what we ourselves lack, and how we can use that situation to grow stronger.
7. Korinji sits within seventeen acres of forested ravines, surrounded by farmland. It is very quiet here, and we value our participation in the rhythm of the seasons. This also means that we live with the elements. When it is hot, we are sometimes hot. When it is cold, we are sometimes cold.

8. Part of our activity includes cutting wood for heat, growing vegetables for food, shoveling snow, maintaining buildings and grounds, and other such tasks. Residents are expected to participate in physical labor of various kinds.
9. Modern conveniences, including entertainment, are largely absent here.
10. Because the number of residents varies, there may be periods when you are practicing alone. During such periods, you may need to prepare your own meals using food provided.
11. Above all, Korinji is a place dedicated to Buddhist practice. In the end, there is nothing else to find here except practice. All other concerns, relationships, and activities should be set aside during the period of residency.

What to Bring

This is not a comprehensive list, but details the most important items:

1. At least 2 sets of formal practice garments (gi, juban, obi and hakama for laypersons, robes for ordained) are the norm at Korinji. To obtain lay practice garments, please check online with sites offering laido uniforms, as these are identical. Please get all garments in black, except juban which are white.
2. White tabi socks: these are worn during the morning and other ceremonies. Slip-on style, rather than formal style with kohaze (metal fastening tabs) are fine.
3. Outdoor sandals or shoes that can be quickly slipped on and off, for walking between buildings.
4. Clothes and footwear appropriate for outdoor work, including one blue zip-up coveralls for physical work periods. Traditional Japanese monastic work clothes (samue) are also good to have for less dirty work and casual wear.
5. Warm clothing and extra layers (long underwear, hat, rain jacket, etc.). Wisconsin becomes quite cold in the winter.
6. Toiletries, personal medications.
7. Flashlight or headlamp for getting around the grounds at night.
8. Rinzai Zen jihatsu (Zen eating bowl set) if owned. If not, these will be available to borrow.
9. For students engaged in koan practice: related texts if owned. If not, these are available in the monastery library.

Do not bring:

1. Weapons.
2. Intoxicants: alcohol or drugs.
3. Computers (you may bring a phone, but it must remain off and stored away while on the monastery grounds, and there is no reliable mobile coverage at Korinji. You may have time one day a week to check email using the monastery wifi).

Donations

Korinji survives solely through contributions to the Korinji Foundation, a non-profit charity. The following suggested donations for residency during one's first ango help us to provide food, pay our expenses, maintain the monastery buildings, and continue our life of practice. We are grateful to all our donors.

After successfully completing a first ango, no donation is required for continued residency. In some cases, Korinji may elect to give a small stipend to residents who demonstrate competency and commitment.

NOTE: Donations should be submitted before, or immediately upon, arrival. No one will be disqualified from residency solely for financial reasons. If you are not able to donate the amounts below, please discuss your situation with us and let us know what is possible for you before you arrive. As mentioned, it may also be possible for residents to leave the grounds to work, or to leave the monastery entirely during parts of the year to do so.

Regardless of donation, residents are required to maintain their own health insurance coverage, and are responsible for their own medical and dental expenses.

Full Ango (3 months total, including three dai-sesshin and other events): \$2500

Single month stay: \$900

One week guest: \$250. Shorter guest stay, per day: \$40

To Apply For Residency at Korinji

Fill out the application form that follows, and email it to **info@korinji.org**. With it, please email one current (no older than one month) photograph of yourself. Photos should be portrait style, with you facing the camera directly e.g. passport style.

If you are interested in applying to train for Zen ordination, please also read that information doc on our website.

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- Email:
3. Name:
Relationship:
Email:

Please provide the name, address and telephone numbers of someone we should contact in case of medical emergency:

- Name:
Address:
Relationship:
Telephone 1:
Telephone 2:

Application Questions

Health, Honesty, and Medication Disclosure

Korinji training can be physically and psychologically demanding. A history of treatment, diagnosis, medication, or difficulty does not automatically disqualify an applicant. However, honesty and full disclosure are required.

False, incomplete, or misleading answers, including withholding relevant medical, psychological, psychiatric, substance-use, or legal information, may result in rejection of the application or removal from residency if discovered later.

Applicants and residents who are taking prescription medication, including psychiatric medication, must continue to take it as prescribed unless any change is made under the supervision of the prescribing medical provider. Residents may not stop, reduce, increase, or otherwise alter prescribed medication without informing both their provider and Korinji.

If accepted for residency, you are expected to promptly inform Korinji of any significant change in your physical or mental health, medication, treatment, legal status, or capacity to participate in training.

1. Please describe your educational background and current profession or employment.
2. What experience do you have in Zen practice or other spiritual/religious training? Please list your teachers and how long you have studied with each.
3. What experience do you have with formal meditation retreats involving seated meditation? Please indicate the type of retreat, number of days, and approximate hours of seated meditation per day.

4. Have you ever lived in a religious, spiritual, monastic, or other focused residential practice community? Please provide the organization name, dates of residence, and contact information if available.

5. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? If yes, please explain.

6. Are you currently, or have you within the past five years been, under the care of a psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor, therapist, addiction counselor, or other mental-health professional? Please describe.

7. Have you ever experienced or received treatment for major depression, suicidal thoughts or attempts, self-harm, bipolar disorder, mania or hypomania, psychosis, hallucinations, paranoia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, severe anxiety, PTSD or trauma-related symptoms, dissociation, eating disorder, substance abuse or addiction, psychiatric hospitalization, or any other mental, psychological, emotional, or behavioral condition affecting daily functioning? Please describe.

8. Are you currently receiving medical, psychological, psychiatric, addiction-related, or pain-related treatment, or are you currently taking any prescription medication? If yes, please describe the condition, treatment, medications, and provide the name and contact information of your current care provider. Korinji may require written permission before contacting any provider.

9. Do you currently have, or have you within the past five years received treatment or prescription medication for, diabetes, migraines, allergies, heart condition, sleep disorder, seizure disorder, chronic pain, injury, dietary restriction, or any other physical ailment, illness, or medical condition? Please describe.

10. Do you have any physical, medical, psychological, or emotional condition that could limit your participation in Korinji training, including physical work, hiking steep terrain, extended unmoving meditation, communal living and sleeping, reduced sleep during intensive periods, silence, correction, or limited outside communication? Please explain.

11. Do you have specific skills that may be useful to the monastery, such as sewing, cooking, construction, maintenance, gardening, farming, art, web design, editing, accounting, administration, or other skills? Please describe.

12. Please describe your present home situation.

13. What are your plans after finishing this training period?

14. How did you first hear about Korinji?

15. During your time at Korinji, you will be required, regardless of prior experience, to practice according to the instructions of the abbot. If you currently have a Zen or other Buddhist teacher, have you notified that person of your intention to apply for residency at Korinji, and do you have that person's permission to do so?

16. If you have prior Zen practice experience, please indicate the practice method you are currently using, such as breath-counting, kōan practice, shikantaza, or another method.

17. In a few words, why do you want to practice at Korinji?

18. In a few words, describe what you believe Zen is, and what the intent of Zen practice is.

19. If you have taken refuge in the Three Jewels, received the five lay precepts, or been ordained, please indicate when, where, and from whom.

20. Have you also applied to residential programs elsewhere? If so, please list them and indicate whether you have been accepted, rejected, or are awaiting a decision.

Residency Donation

Full Ango (3 months total, including three dai-sesshin): \$2500

Single month stay: \$900.

One week guest: \$250.

Shorter stay, per day: \$40

Indicate here the amount you will donate before, or upon, arrival:

Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, Confidentiality, and Applicant Attestation

I understand that residency at Korinji involves strenuous traditional Buddhist monastic training. This may include long periods of seated meditation, ten hours or more of formal practice per day during intensive periods, reduced rest or sleep, physical labor, communal living, limited privacy, sharp verbal correction, and use of the keisaku stick according to monastery custom.

I understand that private meetings with the Zen teacher may, in some instances, be monitored or recorded for the protection of both parties. Such recordings will be kept confidential, accessed only when necessary, and retained only as long as needed.

I understand that Korinji is a rural property with natural and physical hazards, including rugged walking conditions, steep slopes, stairs, uneven ground, falling branches, noxious plants such as poison ivy, insects, ticks, mosquitoes, wildlife, weather-related hazards, and possible tick- or mosquito-borne illness.

Contagious Disease

I understand that residential and retreat life involves close contact with others, including people who may be elderly or medically vulnerable. I agree not to come to Korinji if I have tested positive for a contagious illness, have symptoms of illness, believe I may have been exposed to a contagious illness, or have not yet been cleared as non-contagious after illness or exposure.

Korinji may require testing, masking, isolation, delayed arrival, departure from the monastery, or other reasonable precautions related to contagious disease. Residents agree to monitor themselves for signs of illness and to notify Korinji immediately if symptoms arise.

Medical and Dental Expenses

I understand that I am responsible for all personal medical, psychological, psychiatric, dental, emergency, and transportation expenses during my residency. I agree to maintain sufficient health insurance coverage for the entire period of my stay.

Health, Medication, and Disclosure

I affirm that all medical, psychological, psychiatric, substance-use, legal, and personal information I have provided in this application is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

I understand that false, incomplete, or misleading answers, including withholding relevant information, may result in rejection of my application or immediate removal from residency.

If I am taking prescription medication, including psychiatric medication, I agree to take it as prescribed unless a change is made under the supervision of the prescribing provider. I agree not to stop, reduce, increase, or otherwise alter prescribed medication without informing both my provider and Korinji.

If accepted for residency, I agree to promptly inform Korinji of any significant change in my physical or mental health, medication, treatment, legal status, or ability to participate in training.

Instructional Material and Confidentiality

I understand that some instruction given at Korinji is private, proprietary, or confidential, and is not public teaching material. I agree not to instruct, transmit, reproduce, record, publish, distribute, or share, in whole or in part, any instructional material, practices, documents, recordings, or training to which I am exposed at Korinji without express permission from the Korinji abbot.

Community Policies

I understand that Korinji has established community policies, including a Harassment Policy with grievance procedure, a policy governing Teacher-Student Relationships, and a policy defining Ordained and Teacher status. These policies are available for me to read in the Korinji office.

Release and Agreement

In consideration of being permitted to participate in residency and related activities at Korinji, I knowingly and voluntarily assume the risks described above and all other risks inherent in monastic training, physical labor, rural living, meditation practice, travel, and related activities.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, I release, waive, discharge, and agree not to sue the Korinji Foundation, its directors, officers, teachers, employees, agents, volunteers, representatives, and landowners of premises where Korinji-related activities take place, from claims arising out of injury, illness, loss, damage, or death connected with my participation, presence on the premises, or transportation to or from activities, including claims based on ordinary negligence.

I understand that Korinji may deny participation to any applicant, and may terminate any person's participation at any time, in its sole discretion. I understand that removal from residency may occur without refund.

I affirm that I have read this Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk, Confidentiality, and Applicant Attestation; that I understand it; that I sign it voluntarily; that no oral statements or promises outside this written agreement have been made to me; and that I am at least 18 years of age and legally competent to sign, or am the legal guardian of the applicant.

Signature of Applicant or Guardian: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____