

All glory to Sri Guru and Sri Gauranga

RETREAT GUIDELINES



Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Seva Ashram
Soquel, California

Contents

Welcome
Leadership
Registration
Schedule
Transportation
The facilities

What to bring
What not to bring
What's provided
Respecting the sacred space
Upon arrival after the retreat
A quick look at our facilities

Welcome

Our retreats are open to anyone regardless of age, ethnicity, or faith and is an ideal opportunity to:

- Immerse yourself in the practice of bhakti-yoga
- Reflect on your path in life and how you can go forward
- Develop friendships with fellow spiritual seekers

Leadership

Our retreats are led by experienced bhakti-yoga practitioners, both monks and lay persons, who are adept in representing the teachings of our revered spiritual guardians and eager to share the wealth of their experience with you.

Registration

Everyone interested in participating in the retreat is requested to register and confirm their participation at their earliest possible convenience.

To register, please visit our [retreat registration page](#) and complete the process as explained there.

The suggested donation for participation in the retreat is \$150. A deposit of \$20 is requested from each participant at the time of registration to confirm participation, and this will be credited to the full donation collected upon arrival at the retreat. If at any time prior to the retreat you wish to cancel your registration, your deposit will be refunded. You may also optionally provide the full suggested donation prior to arriving at the Ashram.

We prefer that everyone who joins the retreat participates from beginning to end, but if you are only able to participate for part of the retreat period, please let us know on your registration form and we will welcome you unless our facilities become fully booked with guests staying for the full retreat.

Our facilities are limited, and the sooner we know you are coming, the better we will be able to accommodate you, so please register to reserve your space as soon as you are able.

Sample schedule

Friday

4-6 PM	Arrival of retreat participants Registration and provision of accommodation
6-7:30	Welcome meeting Introduction to the retreat and the ashram Group exercise
7:30-8	Evening prasadam

Saturday

7-7:30 AM	Refreshments (optional)
7:30-8:30	Introduction to bhakti-yoga
8:30-9:15	Breakfast prasadam
9:30-10:30	Kirtan workshop
10:45-11:45	Devotional cooking worship
12:00-12:45	Introduction to puja
12:45-1:15	Midday arati
1:30-2:15	Midday prasadam
2:15-4:15	Rest time
4:30-5:30	Nature walk and discussion
5:30-6:30	Free time
6:30-7	Evening arati
7-7:30	Evening prasadam
7:30-8	Free Spirit Theatre
8	Open forum

Sunday

5:30-6:45	Arati and kirtan (optional)
7-7:30	Refreshments (optional)
7:30-8:30	Introduction to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
8:30-9:15	Breakfast
9:30-11:30	Seva
12:00-1	Midday arati and kirtan
1-2	Bhakti-yoga as taught in <i>Srimad Bhagavad-gita</i>
2-2:30	Midday prasadam
2:30-4:15	Rest time
4:30-5:30	Sanskrit mantra workshop
5:30-6:30	Free time
6:30-7	Evening arati
7-7:30	Evening prasadam
7:30	Bonfire kirtan at Seabright Beach

Monday

5:30-6:45	Arati and kirtan (optional)
7-7:30	Refreshments (optional)
7:30-8:30	Class on Sri Chaitanya-charitamrta
8:30-9:15	Breakfast
9:30	Farewell to all

Transportation

Directions

The Bhakti Yoga Retreat will take place at Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Seva Ashram in Soquel, California. The exact address of the ashram is:

2900 N. Rodeo Gulch Road
Soquel, CA 95073 USA

You can view the address online [here](#).

By car

The ashram is about 10 minutes from the town of Soquel. Driving directions to the ashram from the nearest cities are available [here](#):

- [Santa Cruz, San Jose, San Francisco, Sacramento](#)
- [Los Angeles, Portland, Salt Lake City](#)

By bus

If you plan to come by bus, book your ticket to the [Santa Cruz Bus Station](#). We will be happy to pick you up there and bring you to the ashram if you request this on your registration form. Alternately, from the [Santa Cruz Metro Center](#), located adjacent to the Bus Station, you can ride the local [#71 bus](#) for about 15 minutes to the Ashram's nearest bus stop at [Soquel Drive and Research Park Drive](#). It is about a one hour walk to the ashram from there, so again we will be happy to pick you up and bring you by car from the bus stop to the ashram.

By plane

If you plan to arrive by air, the closest airports to the ashram are San Jose Airport (SJC), San Francisco Airport (SFO), and Oakland Airport (OAK). Driving directions from the airports to the ashram are available [here](#):

- SJC, SFO, OAK

Bus routes from the airports to Santa Cruz are available here:

- SJC, SFO, OAK

If you inform us of your flight details, we may be able to arrange for your transportation by car from the airport directly to the ashram (we'll try given the resources we have).

The facilities

Parking

If you come by car to the ashram, there will be space to park your car.

Dorms

A limited number of dorm rooms are available for guests, and these are allocated first to those who are unable to camp.

Camping

The majority of the camp sites at the Ashram are within 200 meters walk of the parking area and the main ashram buildings. Sites to camp beside your car are limited and will be available on a first come, first serve basis.

Bathrooms

The bathroom facilities at the ashram are rustic, so please come prepared for this. If you see anything necessary is missing from the facilities during your stay, please inform one of the retreat coordinators.

Communication

Cell tower reception with most carriers is limited or unreachable on the majority of the ashram property. Should you need to be contacted, you can be reached while at the ashram on the Ashram landline at 831-462-4712. Wifi access will also be available during your stay.

Things to watch out for

Mosquitoes, ticks, and poison oak are found at the Ashram. Especially while walking in high grass or anywhere off-trail, please beware of poison oak and afterwards check to make sure you are free from any ticks.

What to bring

Tent

Be sure to have a rain fly and stakes for your tent in case of inclement weather

Sleeping gear

Sleeping bag

Sleeping mat (air mattress, futon, etc.)

Pillow

Clothing

Shirts

Pants or dresses

Shoes or sandals comfortable for walking

Socks

Devotional clothes are encouraged

White dhotis and kurtas for men

Sarees for women

Hats

For the sun and for warmth

Light

Flash light/headlamp

Alarm

A clock or a device that has an alarm function

Personal hygiene items

Soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.

Towel

Reusable water bottle

Plate, bowl, cup, and spoon

What not to bring

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco

Meat products

Weapons

Pets

Anything illegal

What's provided

Water

The Soquel Seva Ashram has an abundant water supply coming from an artesian well on site.

Nourishment

All retreat guests will be provided with three meals a day of delicious prasadam (sanctified food) plus additional refreshments throughout the day.

Equipment

Camping equipment (tents, sleeping bags, etc.) will be available for anyone who requires them and is unable to bring their own.

Respecting sacred space

The Ashram is a sacred place, and the sanctity of this place needs to be consciously maintained by everyone who visits. So that you can honour this sacred place according to the customs that have been established by our spiritual teachers and better connect with the spirit of devotion being cultivated at the Ashram, please observe the following.

Cleanliness

Please bathe at least once a day while at the ashram.

Please keep your personal belongings organised within your personal space (tent, car, room, etc.).

Dress

Please wear clean and modest clothes which are not visibly tight and which fully cover the upper body and the legs up to the ankles.

Devotional clothes are encouraged but not required for retreat participants. They will be available for purchase at the retreat for anyone who wishes to acquire them.

The Temple

Please remove your shoes before entering the Temple.

Please have clean hands, feet, and clothes when entering the Temple.

Please knock lightly on the door as you enter the Temple and make a gesture of respect towards the altar after entering.

Please sit on a mat in the Temple in sukhasana or siddhasana, preferably without leaning against a wall.

If you are not accustomed to sitting cross-legged on the floor for an extended period, you may lean against a wall or sit in a chair.

While seated in the Temple, please avoid pointing your back or feet towards the altar.

Please do not carry on a casual conversation or speak loudly or harshly in the Temple.

Tulasi Devi's greenhouse

Please feel free offer respect to Tulasi Devi from outside her greenhouse but please do not enter the greenhouse unless invited to do so.

Classes

Please feel welcome to ask questions during the classes.

Please avoid leaving in the middle of a class as far as possible.

Phones

Phones should be switched off or kept in flight mode during all retreat activities.

Conversation

Please engage in discussion that is uplifting and devotional while at the Ashram.

Prasadam (sanctified food)

Please be on-time for all meals.

Please wash your hands, plate, and utensils before the meal at the sink in the prasadam hall.

Please receive prasadam from someone who is serving rather than serving yourself.

Please allow any monks present to receive prasadam first.

Please wait to start honouring prasadam until the meal-time prayers have been recited.

Please lift and touch prasadam only with the right hand or with a utensil in the right hand.

Please refrain from talking during meals, or focus conversation on the prasadam or a related spiritual topic.

Please wash your hands, mouth, and dishes after honouring prasadam at the sink in the prasadam hall.

Please clean the area where you honoured prasadam if anything was spilled during the meal.

Kitchen

The kitchen is where offerings are prepared before they are taken in the Temple, so the kitchen is considered a sacred space just like the Temple.

Please do not enter the kitchen unless you have bathed, are wearing clean clothes, and have been invited to do so by a retreat coordinator or designated cook.

Not allowed at the ashram

Use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco

Consumption of meat products

Sexual activity

Gambling

Physical or verbal abuse

Foul language

Upon arrival and after the retreat

Retreat coordinators will be present in the parking lot and welcoming area during the retreat arrival period. When you arrive, please first check-in with one of them before proceeding to your campsite.

At the conclusion of the retreat, please check-out with one of the coordinators as you leave.

Anyone interested in staying longer at the Ashram after the retreat can consult with the coordinators at that time.

A Quick Look at Our Facilities



Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Seva Ashram
Soquel, California, USA



Located 5 miles inland from the Monterey Bay
in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains



The Ashram's 28 acres
spans across Rodeo Gulch



The Ashram's hillside meadows are reminiscent of Govardhan Hill in Vrindavan, India.



Nature trails crisscross the Ashram



Apples, pears, plums, and avocados
ornament the Ashram's hillside



The Samadhi Mandir beneath the oak tree



Sri Puspa Samadhi Mandir
of
Sri Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswami Maharaj
The Founder-Acharya of the Ashram



Kirtan instruments in the Temple



A midday offering at the Asrham



Sri Sri Guru Gauranga Gandharvika Giridhari
The Presiding Deities of the Ashram

We look forward to welcoming you
to the Ashram for our Bhakti Yoga Retreat soon.

Visit our [retreat registration page](#)
to reserve your spot.