

In Silence, In Relationship

Zen, Yoga & Psychological Groupwork Retreat

Kaisanji Monastery, Serifos, Greece

Arrival and check-in: Friday 16 October 2026

Retreat programme: Saturday 17-Wednesday 21 October 2026

A five-day retreat in silence, movement and relationship

About the Retreat

This retreat takes place at Kaisanji, a Zen monastery on the island of Serifos, Greece. Rooted in traditional Zen practice, it brings together zazen meditation, yoga and psychological groupwork as complementary elements of an integrated path of inner growth.

The retreat is carefully structured to help you step away from the pace and distractions of everyday life, settle into the rhythm of the monastery and immerse yourself in practices that cultivate awareness, embodied presence and psychological flexibility. In practice, this involves early mornings, periods of silence, sustained meditation, yoga, communal work and guided psychological groupwork.

Zen, yoga and psychology each offer something distinct. Zen and yoga invite us to slow down, become more present and develop a clearer awareness of our thoughts, emotions, memories and bodily sensations. Through this awareness, we may begin to notice how our inner experiences shape the ways we relate to ourselves, to others and to the world around us.

Awareness, however, is not always enough on its own. Once something has been noticed, questions may follow: How do we understand what has arisen? How might we respond to it? What could it mean for the way we live, relate and make choices?

Psychological groupwork offers a supported space in which to explore these questions. It can help us make sense of our experiences, recognise familiar patterns and consider new ways of coping and responding. What emerges through meditation, movement and reflection may then be integrated into a more connected and meaningful life.

The retreat therefore moves between silence and relationship, noticing and understanding, inner awareness and meaningful action in everyday life.

What the Retreat Is Designed to Support

The five-day format offers time to settle into the rhythm of the monastery, become familiar with the practices and participate in a temporary community.

The schedule is designed to support participants in:

- cultivating openness and curiosity towards themselves, others and the world;
- developing clearer awareness of their inner experience beyond the habitual pace and distractions of daily life;
- recognising emotional and relational patterns that influence how they respond;
- exploring more flexible and compassionate ways of responding;
- supporting grounding and nervous-system regulation through movement, breath, stillness and meaningful connection;
- considering how to act in ways that are more closely aligned with what matters to them.

These are intentions rather than guaranteed outcomes. Each participant's experience will be different.

The Three Pillars of the Retreat

Zazen

Zazen is the practice of seated meditation. In zazen, we practise simply sitting-not striving to achieve a particular state or attempting to fix or force our experience. Participants are invited to meet the present moment as it is and notice thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and impulses as they arise.

The practice may also invite a different experience of the boundaries we habitually draw between ourselves, others and our surroundings.

The retreat includes two periods of zazen each day, each lasting approximately 40 minutes. Instruction and guidance will be provided for participants who are new to the practice. Alternative sitting positions and physical adaptations will also be available.

Kinhin, or walking meditation, forms part of the daily rhythm. Samu, or mindful communal work, offers an opportunity to bring the same quality of attention to ordinary activities such as cooking and cleaning.

Zazen is facilitated by Konstantinos Sgoumpopoulos, founder of Zen Center Athens and an experienced Zen teacher and martial arts practitioner. His interest in Zen developed through the recognition that physical training alone could not fully support psychological and spiritual growth.

After training in China, he continued his Zen practice in Japan under Koten Roshi. His apprenticeship led to Dharma transmission and permission to guide the meditation practices of Zen Center Athens. Konstantinos brings this experience to the retreat through his teaching of zazen and the traditional framework of Zen practice.

Further information about Konstantinos and Zen Center Athens is available on the centre's website.

Yoga

Yoga offers a way of returning attention to the body through movement, posture and breath. Participants are invited to notice areas of ease, tension and effort, and to explore how the body can be approached with sensitivity rather than force.

The practice is inspired by the Satyananda Yoga and Scaravelli Yoga traditions, both of which emphasise awareness, activation of the spine and connection to the earth. It also includes breathing practices intended to support steadiness, awareness and nervous-system regulation, with activating, balancing and calming pranayama practices suitable for different levels of experience.

The morning practice runs from 06:00 to 07:45 and includes asanas, pranayama and pratyahara, or relaxation. Sessions are adapted to the needs of the group and are suitable for participants with different levels of experience. No previous yoga experience is required.

Where needed, the teacher will offer variations of the asanas and pranayama practices. Participants are encouraged to practise according to their own level of experience, with an emphasis on growth without force.

Yoga is facilitated by Alexandra Sotiropoulou, who has three decades of personal practice and has been teaching since 2003. She is a 500-hour certified Yoga Instructor with Yoga Alliance International and is fluent in English.

Alexandra specialises in asana and meditation, guiding participants with experience, purpose and a deep commitment to the practice.

Further information about Alexandra and her work is available on her webpage.

Psychological Groupwork

The psychological groups provide a supportive space in which to explore what arises during the retreat, connect with others and consider new ways of responding.

Sessions will integrate evidence-based psychological tools drawn from Schema Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Participants may be invited to explore the connections between thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and behaviours, and to consider how they might act in ways that are more closely aligned with their needs.

Drawing on Schema Therapy, we may notice different "modes": temporary emotional states and coping patterns that become active in particular situations. These might include a vulnerable part, a demanding or critical voice, or a part that withdraws, complies, controls or protects.

Rather than judging these responses or trying to eliminate them, we will explore what they may be attempting to communicate. Attention will also be given to strengthening what Schema Therapy calls the Healthy Adult mode: our capacity to respond with compassion and perspective, recognise our needs, set appropriate boundaries and make choices with greater awareness and freedom.

Through guided reflection, dialogue, experiential exercises and moments of playfulness, participants will have opportunities to experiment with different ways of expressing themselves, responding to others and relating to what matters.

The intention is not to analyse or fix one another. No participant will be required to disclose more than they wish, and personal boundaries will be respected. Group confidentiality will be discussed at the beginning of the retreat.

Psychological groupwork is facilitated by Dr Anastasia Sgoumpopoulou, an HCPC-registered Counselling Psychologist with ten years' experience across the NHS, voluntary sector and private practice in the UK.

She holds a Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology from the University of East London, a Master's degree in Mental Health from King's College London and an undergraduate degree in Psychology from University College London.

Anastasia works integratively, drawing on Schema Therapy, psychodynamic, CBT and mindfulness-based approaches. She tailors her work to individual needs, helping people understand the roots of their difficulties and develop healthier ways of relating to themselves and others.

She supports people experiencing depression, anxiety, ADHD, trauma, grief and attachment difficulties, and has particular expertise in addiction.

Daily Flow

The following schedule is indicative and may vary slightly on arrival and departure days.

06:00-07:45	Yoga and pranayama
08:20-09:00	Zazen and kinhin
09:30-10:00	Breakfast
10:00-11:00	Free period
11:00-12:30	Samu
13:00-13:30	Light lunch and snacks

13:30-16:00	Free time
16:00-18:00	Psychological groupwork
18:30-19:15	Dinner
20:20-21:00	Zazen and kinhin
21:30	Lights out

Is This Retreat Right for Me?

This retreat may be suitable for you if you are:

- open to a structured daily schedule and shared rhythm of practice;
- interested in Zen, yoga and psychological exploration;
- willing to participate in silence, communal work and shared activities;
- able to engage respectfully in a group;
- curious about your emotional and relational patterns;
- prepared for some physical, interpersonal or emotional discomfort;
- willing to participate as fully as you reasonably can while respecting your limits.

This retreat may not be the right fit if you are primarily seeking:

- a flexible island holiday;
- spa treatments or luxury wellness services;
- a programme organised around individual preferences;
- uninterrupted relaxation without structured participation;
- intensive individual psychotherapy;
- support during an acute mental health crisis.

The monastery and surrounding landscape offer beauty, quiet and comfort, but the setting is intended to support the work of the retreat rather than provide an individually tailored holiday.

No previous experience of Zen, meditation, yoga or psychological groupwork is required. Participants should, however, be willing to engage with all three pillars of the programme.

Practices may be adapted, or occasionally stepped back from, where necessary and following discussion with the facilitators.

Silence is observed during practices and meals, and in the communal areas of the monastery. There will also be opportunities to connect and converse during free time outside these areas.

The retreat may not be suitable for people currently experiencing acute psychological distress, significant instability or a mental health crisis.

An introductory call is required before booking so that you and the facilitators can discuss your circumstances and consider whether the retreat is an appropriate fit for you at this time.

This retreat is not about becoming someone new in five days. It is about creating conditions for honesty, awareness, connection and growth. Growth can ask something of us and does not always happen within what is familiar or comfortable.

Practical Information

Accommodation

Kaisanji's architecture follows the natural terrain and blends into the surrounding landscape, creating an atmosphere of quiet and simplicity. Artworks by Zen teachers and uncluttered communal spaces support the contemplative nature of the retreat.

Accommodation is provided in comfortable, spacious twin rooms shared by two participants. Each room has:

- an en suite bathroom;
- a desk;
- a sea view;
- a private outdoor seating area.

If you are unable to share a room, please discuss this with the facilitators before booking so that any available alternatives can be considered.

Photographs and further information: kaloampeli.com/accommodations/kaisanji/

Arrival and Departure

Arrival and check-in: Friday 16 October 2026

Retreat programme begins: Saturday 17 October 2026

Departure and check-out: Wednesday 21 October 2026

Further details about recommended ferry times and transfers will be provided before the retreat.

Travel to Serifos

Serifos is approximately two hours by ferry from Piraeus Port in Athens, depending on the ferry service.

Participants are responsible for arranging and paying for their own flights and ferry tickets. Transport between Serifos port and the monastery is included in the retreat fee.

Meals

Our chef, Esco, prepares nourishing vegetarian meals each day using local, seasonal and organic ingredients wherever possible.

Further information about Esco and his work is available on Instagram: @plantecatering.

Physical Accessibility

The monastery is built across a natural hillside. There are stairs, and some walking is required between the bedrooms, kitchen, dining areas and zendo.

Please discuss any mobility limitations or accessibility requirements during the introductory call so that the facilitators can consider whether the setting will be suitable for you.

Phone and Internet Use

Phones will not be collected, but participants are strongly encouraged to minimise their use to support the retreat environment and their own engagement with the programme.

Mobile signal may be limited. Wi-Fi is available in the bedrooms.

Alcohol and Other Substances

The consumption of alcohol and non-prescribed substances is not permitted during the retreat.

Medication

Participants should bring an adequate supply of any prescribed medication and continue taking it as directed.

Small refrigerators are available in the bedrooms for medication that requires cool storage. Please inform the facilitators in advance of any relevant medical needs or storage requirements.

What to Bring

Participants are asked to bring:

- plain white tops and comfortable black trousers for practice;
- comfortable clothing suitable for yoga and meditation;
- warmer layers for early mornings and evenings;
- comfortable walking shoes;
- a swimming costume;
- personal toiletries and any required medication;
- sun protection and a reusable water bottle;
- any personal meditation or yoga equipment they prefer to use.

Further guidance about clothing and equipment will be provided before arrival.

Facilitators

The retreat will be facilitated by:

- Dr Anastasia Sgoumpopoulou;
- Alexandra Sotiropoulou;
- Konstantinos Sgoumpopoulos.

Cost and What Is Included

The retreat fee is EUR 800.

The fee includes:

- shared accommodation;
- all meals;
- the full retreat programme;
- transport from Serifos port to the monastery and back.

Flights and ferry tickets are not included.

Payment can be made in up to four instalments.

Securing Your Place

Before booking, participants are invited to arrange a 30-minute introductory call with Dr Anastasia Sgoumpopoulou.

The call offers an opportunity to discuss your circumstances, ask questions and consider whether the retreat is an appropriate fit for you.

Email	Telephone
a.sgoumpopoulou@gmail.com	+44 7541 229347

Cancellation Policy

A full refund is available for cancellations made at least two weeks before the retreat begins.

For cancellations made fewer than two weeks before the retreat begins, fees are partially refundable or transferable. The same applies to payments made by instalment.

Transfer of a booking to another person is permitted, subject to the new participant completing a call with one of the facilitators.

If the retreat is cancelled by the organisers, participants may choose either a full refund or a transfer to a future retreat. Travel costs are excluded.