



Govinda Valley Ashram & Yoga School STUDENT MANUAL

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Table of Contents

Welcome to the Govinda Valley (GV) Ashram & Yoga School.....	3
Purpose of Student Manual.....	3
Govinda Valley Context.....	3
Expectations of the Student Body.....	4
Time Away, Sick Leave, Pastoral Care, Overnight Stays.....	4
Pets.....	5
Heart & Soul Retreats.....	5
Schedule.....	5
Reception Back Office.....	6
Use of Healing Centre.....	6
Use of Laundry and associated equipment.....	6
Noise and use of Electronics.....	6
Cleanliness and Space Consideration.....	6
Parking.....	7
Interpersonal Interactions.....	7
Internet Usage.....	8
Minimal fragrance.....	8
Safety.....	9
Bond and Respect for Property.....	10
Kitchen.....	10
Weekly General Meeting.....	11
Weekly Department Heads Meeting.....	11
Grievances or Conflict Resolution.....	11
Communication Channels.....	11
Submitting unavailability under ConnectTeams App.....	12
Requesting a 'Shift Swap' on the ConnectTeams App.....	14
Misc: Local Shops/Stores.....	15
Misc: Public Transport.....	15



One who is a stranger to a land asks of one who
knows it, he goes forward instructed by the
knowing one. Such, indeed, is the blessing of
instruction, one finds a path that leads him straight
onward.

- Rig Veda 10.32.7



Welcome to the Govinda Valley (GV) Ashram & Yoga School

Welcome to the Govinda Valley Ashram & Yoga School! We are very excited to learn and grow with you.

Our foundations lie within the Yoga tradition and are built on the traditional principles and practices of yoga as derived from ancient authoritative texts, such as the Yoga Sutras, Bhagavad-Gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, etc.

In particular, within the Govinda Valley Ashram we are committed to a Sattvic lifestyle and Service (*Seva*).

- '*Sattvic*' is a yogic term that refers to that which allows you to operate at your **fullest potential** through harmony and balance with nature and thus promotes your psychological, physical and spiritual health. This will be further explored during your time here.
- '*Seva*' The essential spirit of yoga is one of selfless service, and the practice of such service lies at the core of everything we do at Govinda Valley.

At GV **all** activities - speech, thoughts, behaviour, and appearance should reflect the mode of sattva (mode of goodness). Therefore, all thought, speech and behaviour should reflect kindness, clarity, and consideration, with no coarse language or action to be used on the premises.

Our intentional School of Yogic studies is focused on inward discovery and spiritual enhancement for the purpose of self-realisation.

It is our aim to provide a clean, supportive and safe educational space for our guests, students and faculty.

This allows us all to realise ourselves into a higher level of self-awareness, personal alignment, and commitment to contribute to the greater good for all.

Purpose of Student Manual

This Manual details the practical operations and cultural expectations we require of students during your enrolment at Govinda Valley Ashram & School of Yogic studies.

Govinda Valley Context

Govinda Valley is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to educating and training people in the yogic way of life.

Govinda Valley Ashram & School of Yogic studies is dedicated to teaching the ancient yogic sciences. This means, the lifestyle and knowledge shared in the School of Yogic studies will be reflective of the yogic worldview.

Expectations of the Student Body

For Govinda Valley Ashram & School of Yogic studies to operate in a manner that is most beneficial for the growth and education of its students, we expect the following:

1. That you abide by the moral principles expounded by the yamas and niyamas (*see Govinda Valley Ashram & School of Yogic studies Code of Conduct*)
2. That you cooperatively engage in your service (*see Govinda Valley Ashram & School of Yogic studies Code of Conduct*)
3. That you engage in your Sadhana (prescribed spiritual practice) (*see Govinda Valley Ashram & School of Yogic studies Code of Conduct*)
4. That you attend and engage in your course according to the **Course Outline** and the **Govinda Valley Ashram & School of Yogic studies Code of Conduct**

Time Away, Sick Leave, Pastoral Care, Overnight Stays

During your time at Govinda Valley you are likely to experience the most profound personal growth. For the sake of the process, we do not encourage students to take **any** extended timeaway including overnight leave. For many of you, this will be the first and only time you are immersed in ashram life. In other words, in the current modern world, we are inundated with information and pressures from various sources such as family, peers, work, advertising companies and so on. We very rarely find a moment of stillness or even realise that we should truly discover what our identity and the true purpose of life is.

You may not have an opportunity to be removed from familial, work, social, economic and political pressures, distractions or suggestions like this again. Therefore in being at an Ashram, you are given a rare opportunity to dive deep into stillness and modest living which creates the time and the mental, physical and emotional space required for your deep personal analysis and reflection. Please use this opportunity wisely.

Notably, people often experience a rollercoaster of emotions given such a drastic change in lifestyle or you may be working through issues and beliefs that are painful or deeply held.

Rather than isolating yourself or being engaged in distracting activity, we recommend working through the challenges with the support and understanding of the Management. In this regard, the Student Supervisor is in charge of Pastoral Care, and will be available to give emotional support where required. With that being said, we understand that sometimes ‘things come up’ that can get in the way of our spiritual and personal journey. If this happens and you do need time away, please see your Department Head first so arrangements can be made to cover services in your absence.

The dates and times of any breaks must always be made in agreement with your Department Head.

In cases where you choose to prematurely leave (departure before the initially agreed departure date), your bond is forfeited.

Sick

If you are unwell, we recommend you take time off to recuperate. You are not required to make up these hours. Please check in with your Department Head so that they understand what is happening. If you need a doctor, or some personal help with your situation contact your Department Head or the Student Supervisor.



***Important Note:** If you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder or significant trauma, please consult with your primary care provider before beginning meditation or our program. While the program and practice of meditation is suitable for most people, it can bring up uncomfortable emotions/sensations.

Pets

To preserve the health of the natural environment, no animals or pets are to be introduced onto the property at any time.

Heart & Soul Retreats

The Govinda Valley schedule largely operates around the needs of Heart and Soul Retreats. Heart and Soul Retreats comprises the retreat business that provides the economic foundation for the whole project. The retreats involve clients who stay on premises for various periods of time for the sake of healing and restoration based on yoga practice and various healing modalities.

Schedule

You are welcome to engage in the workshops and classes offered to guests at Heart and Soul retreats provided they are not private bookings and that guests are given priority first!

You can find the schedule for classes and workshops at the Reception desk and outside the Solar room.

Reception Back Office

This is typically where mail is received. If you have a package posted, it is likely to be here at the reception back office or in the mail box at the Property entrance.

You will also find stationery and office supplies here. Please organise items in their assigned places to ensure the area is clean and retrieval of items is quick and seamless for the reception team.

Use of Healing Centre

Services at the Healing Centre such as Reiki and Massage can be accessed by students at a discounted rate. Please discuss this with the Reception Team.

Use of Laundry and associated equipment

Laundry is used by Housekeeping for Heart and Soul Retreats between 9AM -1PM.

- You are free to use the laundry and its equipment outside these hours provided they are returned for use within service hours.
- Please make sure you remove your items before 9AM so that the Housekeeping team can begin their service quickly!



Noise and use of Electronics

To maintain the serenity of Heart & Soul Retreats, we ask that you:

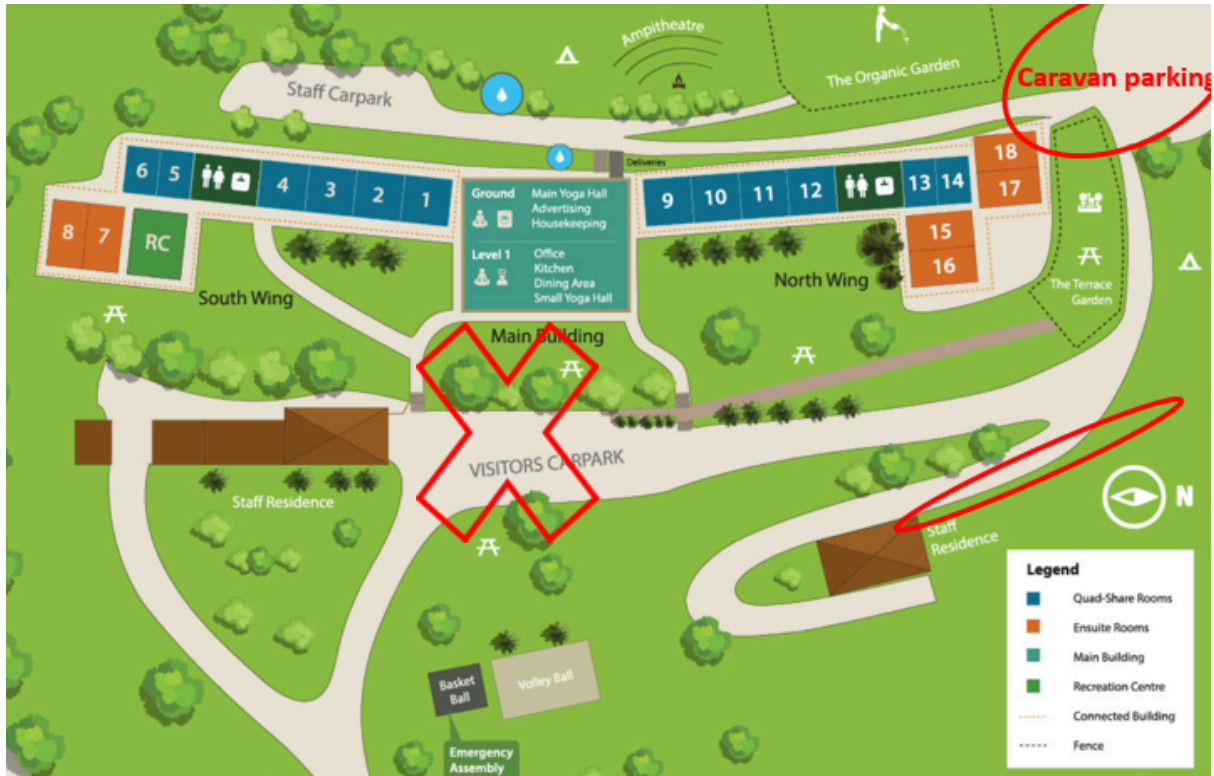
- Remain Mindfully Silent and refrain from playing any music during hours of 9PM – 7:30AM throughout the property.
- Refrain from showering after 9PM.
- Refrain from playing any loud music at any time in public spaces.

Cleanliness and Space Consideration

- Please clean up untidy places as you come across them! For example, wipe up a missed spill or fluff up cushions as you pass.
- Please remove your shoes before entering any room in the Ashram or Solar, Lunar and Lotus Room.
- Return misplaced items as you come across them. For example, return library books to the book shelf, return cushions, bolsters, crockery etc.
- All crockery and cutlery must be returned to the dishwashing area after use.

Parking

- Please do not park at guest parking spaces, instead you may park in the areas circled in 'red'.



Interpersonal Interactions

To ensure that we maintain an environment that is conducive to your learning, spiritual growth and study, the nature of interactions at GV must be held to a high standard and professional. It is expected that:

- All interactions with others are harmonious, respectful, courteous and uplifting
- You refrain from discussions that can be classified as gossip, unconstructive criticism/complaints, bullying, harassment or discriminatory. In other words, speak in way that creates positive change, any speech that does not uplift yourself and those around you should be avoided!
- You do not physical abuse any individual
- You do not cultivate any new emotional or physically intimate relationship with another individual beyond friendship. Emotional and physical intimacies can be highly distracting for all involved which can impede upon your growth and studies during a time where this is your sole priority.
- Men and Women are not to access the Ashram of the opposite sex without:
 - Required as a service task OR

- Approval from Department Heads (For example, to participate in a student event had at the Ashram)
- When this occurs, you must **alert** the Student Body that you are entering the Ashram (with sufficient notice of 10 + minutes) through the Student Chat **and** knock and announce your presence if possible before entering. This is to ensure that all members of the Ashram who are present are sufficiently prepared for the presence of another (for example, an individual may be showering or journalling in private and can prepare to move).

Internet Usage

The following are not approved as appropriate use of the Govinda Valley Ashram and Yoga School connectivity service. We asked that you do not engage in the following:

- Piracy (Illegal downloads of any kind)
- Cyber harassment and Bullying

Minimal fragrance

Exposure to perfumes and other scented products can trigger very serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines or multiple chemical sensitivities. The health effects of fragrances – ranging in severity from mild to debilitating – can include: headaches, migraines, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, shortness of breath and wheezing. Fragrances can be found in a wide range of products including soaps, shampoos, deodorants, hairsprays and cosmetics.

- To protect our students and retreat guests with chemical sensitivities, we ask for your cooperation in helping to create a ‘scent-free’ environment: Avoid wearing strongly and/or artificially scented personal care products such as perfume, ittar/attar, body oils, cologne, aftershave, scented lotions or creams for the body, face or hands. Most brands have fragrance-free products available.
- You may be asked to limit your use of a particular scented product or refrain from using it entirely during your time here.

Safety

- The **Emergency Evacuation Point** is the Basketball Court. This will be indicated to you during your Initial and Official Induction and is also present on all maps around the property.
 - In the case of Emergencies, please follow the direction of Department Heads and Directors.
- **GV is susceptible to Fire Dangers** – The Fire Safety Plan will be communicated to you throughout your enrolment in the course.

- **Fire Protocols** are also posted in all student rooms and ashrams for your information
- **Please** follow the instruction of the Fire Brigade or Fire Wardens (Those wearing a Hi-Vis Vest) during any fire emergency and do not operate according to your own whims.
- **Water:** GV has two water sources:
 - **Creek water** – Non-drinking water. This is used typically in showers and toilets
 - **Rain/filtered water**- Drinking water. All drinking water taps are labelled and this include bubblers/water fountains around the property.
- GV runs on a grey water system. That means items that enter the drainage must be grey water safe! Please buy/use only grey water safe soaps, detergents and the like.
- **Weir:** The weir/causeway may be unsafe to cross at times. Please **do not** cross the weir either by foot or vehicle if it has been flagged as unfit for crossing by Faculty. You will typically have this communicated through the General Student Chat. If you cannot see the ‘red indicator’ the weir is not safe to cross.

Bond and Respect for Property

A \$150aud bond is required upon your arrival. In cases where damages, breaches of the Code of Conduct or premature departure occur (s), your bond may be held. Upon course completion, the bond will be returned. Please refer to Code of Conduct for Bond amount.

Kitchen

As with all the areas within the Ashram, the Govinda Kitchen is a sacred space. In particular, the kitchen is deemed highly important as the yogic tradition views that the subtle reality always pervades the external reality. That means, the energy and vibration of the space directly enters the food that is produced from the kitchen and thus enters your physical body.

In other words, “what you eat, you become” or “What goes in, must go out”. All students are likely to enter the kitchen at one point. To maintain the integrity of the space, we ask:

- The kitchen is only entered for service-related purposes
- All sound vibration in the kitchen is as ‘sacred’ as possible
 - Conversations should be of an uplifting, positive nature
 - Music played is mantra meditation only and produced by listed artists only (find list within kitchen)
 - Singing in the kitchen is of mantra meditation only
- You do not eat or drink when within the kitchen boundaries

- You do not bring any personal items or eating ware into the kitchen. For example, unless required for service, do not bring:
 - Cups
 - Personal drink bottles
 - Journals

Note: Further Kitchen Rules are stipulated in the Code of Conduct

Safety and Hygiene in the kitchen:

If you are working within the kitchen, please arrive

- Wearing closed shoes
- With hair tied back into a tight bun
- Wearing a sleeved shirt that covers the armpits

Weekly General Meeting

Typically, the entire Ashram body meets to discuss updates, protocols, philosophy and concerns. The details are below.

Time and Day: 9AM Tuesday

Location: Lunar Room

If you have input/questions: Please submit this to your relevant Department Head who will raise these at the meetings

Weekly Department Heads Meeting

Typically, Department heads meet weekly to discuss a range of topics for example; system updates, concerns, student health and wellbeing and upcoming events for the efficient and practical operations of the Govinda Valley Project.

Please note, student reviews amongst the Department Heads are completed on a weekly basis to ensure that the health, wellbeing and safety of students is maintained. If a student has expressed a concern that indicates they or another may be at risk of harm, bullying, harassment or discrimination this will be raised at the Department Head Meeting.

Grievances or Conflict Resolution

We hope that your time here will be as peaceful and harmonious as possible! However if you have any concerns or grievances at all, please:

- I. Discuss this with the **Department Head** or submit your concern into the **Student Correspondence box** on the General Management Office door. Your Department Head will attempt to support you in your concerns.
2. If discussion with your Department Head is not sufficient please raise it with the Student Liaison Lead.



3. If that still is not sufficient, please alert a Director. We will do our best to support you!

Communication Channels

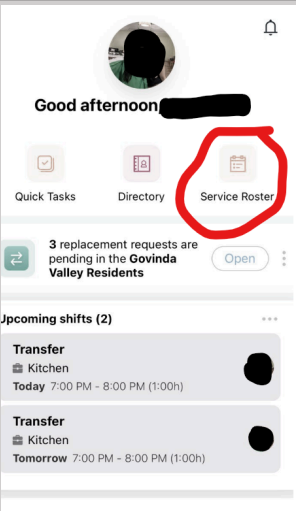
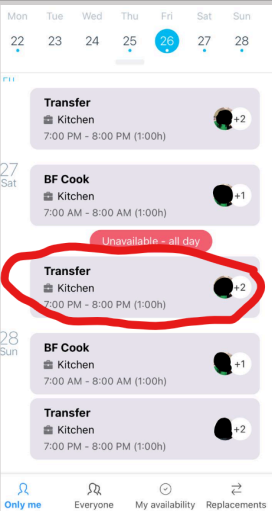
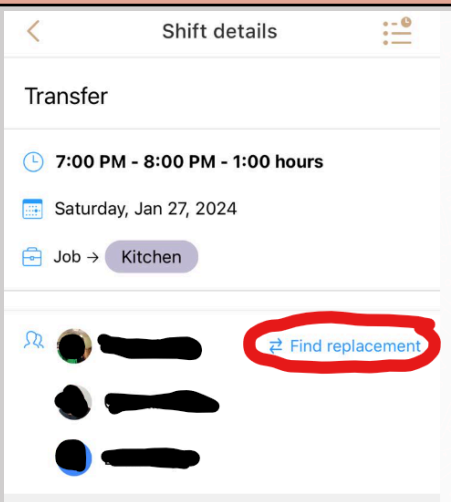
This is a big student body! We typically communicate via:

- WhatsApp
 - **Purpose:** Non-service related items such as General Ashram Discussions, planning of group events etc
- ConnectTeams App
 - **Purpose:**
 - Service Related items
 - Major Announcements (Such as Emergency Declarations)
 - Rostering Arrangement



Requesting a 'Shift Swap' on the ConnectTeams App

A **'Shift Swap'** is when another person takes on a shift assigned to you or vice versa. In these cases, please make sure your hours throughout the week are balanced to still equal 28 hours (unless for some unusual circumstance which you must communicate to your Department Head should you wish you hours to be accounted for in coming weeks).

	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open the ConnectTeams App on your console. 2. Press 'Service Roster'. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Press on the shift you would like to have replaced/swapped.
	<p>Nil image.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Press 'Find replacement' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Click on the member you would like to request assume your shift (best to discuss with them beforehand in person!) 6. All finished!

Misc: Local Shops/Stores

You will get to know Otford and surrounding suburbs and areas throughout your stay here! However, just to get you started in case there are items you need to purchase:

- **Helensburgh:**
Our closest set of stores! Helensburgh is a local suburb about 5 minutes drive from the property. You will find general facilities such as:
 - Grocery store
 - Bakery and Deli
 - Clothing stores
 - Pharmacy
 - Medical Centre
 - Post Office
 - Restaurants
 - Library
 - Op Shop
 - Surf Shop
- **Binnerr Farm**
 - A local Fruit and Vegetable Store
- **Other local towns/suburbs include:**
 - Thirroul, Coledale, Stanwell

Misc: Public Transport

Your closest Train station is Otford Station (5 minute walk from property). There are trains approximately every 2 hours that run toward Sydney.

Helensburgh Train station is the next closest train station (~ 10 minute drive from property).

The wise who searched deep within their heart could
discern between that which is and that which is not.

- Rig Veda