

Meditation in the Forest
In the foothills of the Sierra
August 24-31 Sliding scale cost \$600 - \$430 (8 day retreat)
Teachers: Susie Harrington and Dawn Scott
Cook and Manager: Jenn Knochel

Welcome to the Forest and Meadows of the Wisdom Retreat Center

We will be holding this retreat at the Wisdom Retreat Center, on beautiful and supportive land on the west side of the Sierras. It is a privately owned 200-acre parcel that adjoins National Forest land and is filled with meadows, open forests, and wildness. It has access to walking both on the site and in the adjoining forest. We will be camping in open shaded forest adjacent to meadows that afford open views and generous sky. You will be able to drive close to your campsite to drop off your gear for the week, and then we will leave the cars away from our sites.

This is a simple camping retreat with 3 delicious meals a day and simple day to day outdoor living and practicing. While it is isolated and simple, solar showers and a complete kitchen with fresh food contribute to making it an inviting and nurturing place to be. If an outdoor retreat appeals to you, far from people, without the challenges of backpacking, this may be a retreat for you!

COVID-19

The retreat site is well suited to allow for social distancing while still providing a wonderful retreat container. We have created detailed procedures and systems to allow for a smooth flowing and a safe retreat container. The detailed information is available in a separate document on the website.

Weather

The weather in the Sierra foothills, during August is often warm and dry (temperatures ranging from 60's into 80's), but being on the edge of the mountains, that could change. An important aspect of this retreat in order to ensure safety for all is that there will not be access to indoor spaces, so in the event of rain, we will be practicing in our tents or in the rain! Though rare, please come prepared for this possibility.

Food

Food will be vegetarian, organic where possible, wholesome and plentiful with three meals a day. There will be some protein in the form of nuts, beans, eggs, seeds, nut butters, and cheese, available at all meals. There will be non-dairy and gluten-free options available for those who are lactose or gluten intolerant. Tea, fruit, and other snacks will be provided as well.

Dana and Retreat Cost

The Buddha asked that the teaching of the Dharma be offered freely, without charge, since it is of infinite value, and beyond any price that could be put on it. The tradition of 'Dana,' or mutual giving, has supported Buddhist cultures for 2500 years. In Asia, the monks and nuns offer the teaching, and the lay people support the monastery and fill the monks' begging bowls each morning as they walk through the village on alms rounds. It is a beautiful exchange, in which the hearts of both giver and receiver are opened in joy and gratitude, and love flows between them.

In accordance with that tradition, and in the spirit of generosity, Susie, Dawn and Jennifer offer their teachings, time, and service. The retreat fee just covers the retreat costs: food, retreat center donation, administration costs, and other incidental expenses. After the retreat, there is the opportunity for participants to offer financial support to Susie, Dawn and Jennifer. By offering your financial support, you will help support them to continue living and teaching the Dharma and allow our cook to continue to support retreats. It will be warmly and gratefully received.

Creating the Retreat Container

Precepts

We will undertake to follow the five traditional lay precepts of non-harming during our time together, forming a reliable basis for mutual trust in our little community. These precepts are to remind us of our natural behavior when we are resting in our true nature.

1. To refrain from killing and from other actions that harm oneself or others.
2. To refrain from stealing, from taking anything that is not freely given.
3. To refrain from sexual activity during the retreat.
4. To refrain from lying and from harsh, abusive or damaging speech, or from unnecessarily breaking silence.
5. To refrain from consuming alcohol, illegal drugs, or other intoxicants that will unnecessarily cloud our awareness during the retreat (prescription medication that you need to regularly take is excepted; retreat is not a good time to alter these medications).

Noble Silence

Meditation retreats are traditionally silent. The teachers and cook will emphasize silence, both to deepen our practice and as a refuge. All yogis will have the opportunity for interviews individually or as a group with Susie and Dawn. There will be a message board if you need to communicate with them at any time. To help maintain silence and to support your own and others' practice, please leave all buzzers, cell-phones, alarms, ipods, etc. in the car or at home. If there are issues concerning a yogi job or personal needs, these questions should be directed to the teachers.

Work Meditation

This is our opportunity to both integrate our practice and to serve the community – our Sangha. Each person will be asked to participate in a daily ritual of either meal prep, clean-up, bathroom cleaning, bell ringing, or other shared needs. Participants will sign up for these work meditations (aka yogi jobs) when we arrive at the retreat location. Noble silence will be expected during work meditations as well, except for absolutely necessary instructions.

Retreat Details

For this retreat, we do discourage flying, unless you have opportunity to quarantine safely before heading to the retreat. We also will not be offering carpooling connections like we have for past retreats. We will be reviewing and approving the details of how you will get to the retreat to be sure it is in line with everyone being able to be safe.

Directions to the site from Nevada City will be sent to you two weeks prior. It is about a 45-minute drive from Nevada City. It is all on good roads and high clearance is not required.

Arrival— Meet Monday August 24, 2 pm.

This will allow those nearby to make the drive that day if they prefer. (You are also welcome the evening before.) For those coming from a greater distance, you are encouraged to arrive the evening of August 23rd. You will be able to camp on the site and this will give you time to allow your system to settle, go for walks, etc. Please bring your own breakfast and lunch food. Dinner on August 24th is the first meal that will be served.

Departure— Monday, August 31: We will end our retreat at noon, there will be light snack food available for lunch and departure will be by 2 pm.

What to Bring

- tent
- sleeping pad
- sleeping bag
- Whatever you will need to sit and meditate comfortably--a cushion of some type, a zafu, blow up cushion, chair, etc.--and a mat, pad or blanket to sit on.
- a chair for hanging out/eating, etc., and/or to use for meditation. For sitting, we recommend an upright camp chair or an additional pillow so that you are sitting upright and not with a sagging back. This will enhance your alertness and comfort.
- a small tarp and light pad large enough not only to sit on, but also to lie down on the ground

- clothing (layers) for walking and practicing outside (including long underwear, shorts, lightweight pants, shirt for sun protection)
- bathing suit (optional) if you might walk to the small waterfall 1 ½ miles away or for the lake on your way to or from the retreat site.
- fleece jacket
- wool hat
- sun hat
- good raingear - tops and bottoms
- sunglasses
- sunscreen
- towel
- Face mask and personal-sized hand sanitizer
- water bottle
- personal drinking mug
- walking shoes
- slip on shoes for during practice times and around camp
- personal toiletries

Emergency Contact

Since we will be in silence and in a location with no cell service, we will not be in phone contact with the outside world during the retreat. There is a private emergency phone at the site, which will be used only for true emergencies. In special situations (ill family members in particular), there will be a number at which to leave messages and they will be checked periodically during the retreat. This will be sent in the final email.

Registration

Please register online at www.desertdharma.org. Be sure to complete the Registration Form. This form includes, medical and practice questions, and a release form. A \$150 deposit is required to reserve your place which can be paid online or by check. You will need to send the remaining balance (by check) to Quilley, the registrar, immediately. If you are paying more than the deposit (or when you are paying your balance) we ask that you please send a check. Make checks payable to **Sky Mind Retreats** and send to Quilley Powers 1821 Fifth Avenue, D121, San Rafael, CA 94901.

****Using the online system to pay more than the \$150 deposit is an option, but we ask that you add 3% to cover the fees as we do not account for credit card fees in figuring our expenses.****

Reservations are confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. Please fill out a separate series of forms for each person. If the retreat is full, you'll be placed on a wait list. If that happens, don't be disheartened, as there will probably be cancellations.

Quilley Powers (quilley@yahoo.com) is your point of contact for all retreat and registration questions. Please check the website and this document to look for your answer first.

Payment Information

The full payment is due immediately. The reimbursement terms are listed in the Refund and Cancellation Policy detailed below.

This is a private trip, with no commercial outfit running the trip or profiting from it. Any surplus from the trip balance will go to Sky Mind Retreats, a non-profit 501(c)3, in support of the Dharma. Shortfall will be covered by SMR.

Scholarships are available. We would like you to apply if you need support. Please write a short letter describing your situation and how much assistance you need. Please address your letter to Sky Mind Retreats. Please include this with your registration and a \$150 deposit. If we cannot meet your needs, the deposit is refundable. Scholarship money is for direct retreat costs; if you would like to offer Dana to the teachers and cook, please consider it in your budget.

Refund and Cancellation Policy

If SMR finds it necessary to cancel a trip due to under-enrollment or other unexpected conditions, your deposit and any payments on the balance of the fee will be returned. Deposits are also refundable for those on the waitlist who do not end up being able to go.

Given the short lead time for this retreat, there would normally be no refunds within this time frame; however, with the ever-changing conditions, we will work with you as best we can to refund some money. In order to cover expenses, we will need to keep your deposit. If you cancel after we have begun purchasing food, we will need to keep additional money to cover the food cost. Anyone on the waitlist for whom a space does not become available will receive a full refund.

If you find it necessary to cancel due to possible Covid sickness, we want you to cancel and we will work with you to refund as much as we can. If it is at the last minute, we may have some non-refundable costs such as purchased food. We will work together on a case by case basis.