

Meditation in the Desert

Touching the Earth at Cochise Stronghold

February 13 – 19 Sliding scale cost \$450 - \$320 (7 day retreat)

Teacher: Susie Harrington

Cook: Jenn Knochel

Welcome to the Dragoon Mountains at Dharma Treasure

We will be holding this retreat at the Dharma Treasure Retreat Center, on beautiful and supportive land east of Tucson near Cochise Stronghold . The Stronghold is a located in the Dragoon mountains on land considered sacred by the Chiricahua Apaches. It is a place where granite peaks rise to the east, south and west, spotted with chromatic, lichen-covered boulders, precariously balanced rocks, and charismatic formations that take on a life of their own. An evergreen juniper and oak forest grows in the valley, providing shelter for abundant wildlife including javelina, deer, and hundreds of species of birds. A seasonal stream flows from mountain top pools down through the canyon. Sharing a border with the Coronado National Forest, the retreat center is surrounded by hiking trails that snake up into the mountains for miles.

Dharma Treasure is a dedicated meditation retreat center and is a perfect place for our retreat. We will be camping or, if you choose, staying in a range of housing options. 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. You will be required to get a Covid-19 test prior to leaving home. This is a requirement of the retreat center and is a condition of our using their facility. There is more information in the Covid-19 protocol document

Weather

We expect the weather to be warm and dry (temperatures ranging from 50's into 70's), during the day. The nighttime temperatures will be cool – in the 40's, and you should be prepared for the possibility of temperatures dropping to the low 30's. Though rain is unlikely, you will want your tent to be suitable for that as well. An important aspect of this retreat in order to ensure safety for all is that there will not be access to indoor spaces, (unless you have reserved a sleeping space), so you should be prepared for all conditions. In the event of rain, there are sufficient porches and covered open-air spaces that we can be socially distanced while continuing to practice.

Housing Options

The primary sleeping option is camping. Bring your own tent, sleeping bag, pad, etc. There is dispersed camping on the site, and the landscape is a beautiful one to camp in.

We have a number of alternatives available if you would be more supported in housing with more comforts than camping. There are a number of options from deluxe stand-up insulated tents to strawbale casitas with private baths. In order to keep the base cost of the retreat low, these separate facilities have additional cost proportional to the charge Dharma treasure charges for their use, though all are discounted during our retreat time. The detailed list of options and costs is attached at the bottom of this document.

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.

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.

Trying to walk the balance of the Buddha's instructions and the costs of residential retreats, the retreat fee just covers the retreat costs: food, retreat center fee, administration costs, and other incidental expenses. Support for the teacher and cook are not included.

We offer the sliding scale fee to allow you to choose what is appropriate for you at this time. We hope that this reduces the financial barriers to being on retreat. The low end of the sliding scale is below our cost and is supported by donations. The high end of the scale fully supports your costs in the retreat including overhead and leaves a little extra to contribute to those who choose a low-cost fee. Everything above the low end of the scale is a tax-deductible non-profit donation. For scholarship information see below.

Teacher and Cook support

In accordance with that tradition, and in the spirit of generosity, Susie and Jennifer offer their teachings, time, and service. After the retreat, there is the opportunity for participants to offer financial support to Susie 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. It is suggested that if you will be leaving donations by check that you bring two checks.

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. 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 teacher or to the cook.

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 encouraging carpooling connections like we have for past retreats. However, if you test and quarantine, or live with another retreatant, then carpooling is an option. If you carpool, you will need to stick together if either of you gets sick.

The retreat center is located 90 minutes from Tucson and 45 minutes from Benson or Wilcox. Directions to the site will be sent to you two weeks prior. You can also look up Dharma Treasure on the internet for more information. (<https://dharma-treasure.org>)

Arrival— Meet Saturday February 13 at 3:30 pm.

This will allow those within a wide radius to make the drive that day if they prefer. (You may be able to arrange to come early – ask the registrar for details.) Dinner on February 13th is the first meal that will be served.

Departure— Friday, February 19th: We will end our retreat at 11:00 am; there will be light snack food available for a takeaway lunch.

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)
- warm shawl or wrap for early morning and late day sitting
- fleece jacket
- wool hat
- sun hat
- good raingear - tops and bottoms
- sunglasses
- sunscreen
- towel
- face mask and personal-sized hand sanitizer
- water bottle
- walking shoes for the trails.
- slip on shoes for during practice times and around camp
- personal toiletries
- watch—not your cell phone, which is best left in the car—for use on longer free periods
- flashlight or headlamp
- insulated mug for hot drinks (all other dishes will be provided)
- optional: Bug net and bug spray (It is extremely unlikely that there will be bugs, but it would be wise to be prepared in the off chance that there are)

Emergency Contact

Since we will be in silence, you will not be in phone contact with the outside world during the retreat. There is an 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. Because the retreat is within 60 days, and full payment is required, we suggest sending a single payment by check to Melanie, the registrar. If you are paying more than the deposit (or when you are paying your balance) we ask that you please send a check rather than paying with a credit card. Make checks payable to Sky Mind Retreats and send to Melanie Knapp, 2012 North Tucker Dr, Tuscon AZ, 85716

If you are paying an additional housing fee, please include that with your registration.

****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.

Melanie Knapp (registrations@desertdharma.org) 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 \$100 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.

We often have a waitlist; in order to respect those on the waitlist and to encourage timely cancellations, we have the following cancellation policy:

1. Cancellations received 45 days or more before the retreat: full refund less \$150 deposit.
2. Cancellations 45 – 28 days before the retreat we will retrain 75% of the base fee (\$240) and refund any payment above this amount
3. 28 days or less before retreat start, we will offer a refund of any payment above the base of the sliding scale (\$320).
4. A full refund (minus credit card fees if you choose to pay by cc) will be made if you cancel from the wait list. (If you have paid by check, your check will not be cashed until you are accepted into the retreat.)

If you find it necessary to cancel due to possible Covid-19 sickness, or a positive test, 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.

Housing Options at Dharma Treasure:

Housing selection, indicating your first, second and third choices is made at registration. We will assign housing and notify you 30 days prior to the retreat (January 13th). We will ask that you pay for it promptly after that time.

If the housing option has space for 2 people, you would need to share that with someone you live with, or share a bubble with, or if two people choose to quarantine, test and share that is also an option. (You would arrange this between you and a friend. In this case, you can travel together as well!) Costs listed below are in addition to the sliding cost for this retreat.

Agave Suit A comfortable eco-friendly straw bale spacious studio with sliding door to outside back patio, front porch, comfy king-sized bed, kitchenette, full bath with cast iron bathtub/shower; includes queen size sleeper sofa that pulls out for a 2nd person. Sleeps 1 \$350 supplemental cost. (normal cost is \$130/night)

Casita Manzanita A cozy comfortable eco-friendly straw bale 2 bedroom – (1 Queen, 1 Single) fully-equipped kitchen, sitting area, full bath with cast iron bathtub/shower, sliding door to outside patio, wood burning stove and front porch. For 2 people who can share. Cost is \$275/person (usual cost is \$185/night)

Dharmatory Yurt A 30 ft. Mongolian style yurt with pine flooring offers a more rustic lodging option and includes 4 fully partitioned single-bed rooms (with beds), a main sitting area, electric hot water kettle, and running hot/cold water sink. Bed and bedding are provided. Two composting toilets are located nearby. The air is all contiguous, so it is only suitable for more than one person if they share a bubble. If two or more people request this housing that share a bubble, they would have individual bedrooms. Otherwise, it will be offered to a single person. Cost - \$200 if one person. \$100/person if more than one are able to share the space.

Moon Palaces There are 2 private large size sturdy hexagon tents (Shift Pods) made with reflective material and synthetic down thermal insulation - single occupancy, electric heat is available if needed. Single bed is provided, please bring your own sleeping bag. Cost: \$120

Tent and Gear Rental

A small selection of tents, pads and sleeping bags may be available for those who prefer to camp but aren't able to bring their own gear. 1 person - \$40 rental fee. Note: We may require that you select, put up, and take down the tent and assure that all gear is stored properly for the next user. Please contact the registrar directly for this.