

Awakening in Nature

Touching the Earth at Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Center

Aug 11 - 17, 2025

Sliding scale cost (7 day retreat):

\$750 - \$600 Camping and vehicle sleeping spots

\$900 - \$750 Lodging - Glamping and doubles

\$1,050 - \$950 Lodging - Singles

Teacher: Susie Harrington with Denise Ackert assisting

Welcome to the Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Center

We will be holding this retreat at the Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Center (RMERC), on beautiful and supportive land, 1-1/2 hours northwest of Denver. The Ecodharma Center is located in the Rocky Mountains on land considered sacred by the Ute and Cheyenne peoples. It is rustic retreat center, at 8500 feet, replete with alpine meadows, spruce forests, birdsong and bugling elk, all under a view of Colorado's iconic Continental Divide. 180 acres of private river, meadow and woodland at an altitude of 8500 feet adjacent to National Forest and just a few miles from the Indian Peaks Wilderness. The land is set aside as a nature preserve and home to an abundance of wildlife, including deer, elk, moose, bear and beaver.

The retreat center is surrounded by hiking trails that snake up into the mountains for miles. RMERC is a dedicated meditation retreat center and is a perfect place for our retreat. We will be camping or, if you choose, staying in the beautiful 1939, remodeled, lodge.

This is intended as a simple outdoor retreat, with supplemental indoor housing. Three delicious meals a day are served and we will enjoy simple day to day outdoor living and practicing. While it is isolated and simple, hot showers, normal toilets 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 been following the conservative approach taken by other retreat centers. This approach will most likely require a covid test within 24 hours of arrival, and a request that you mask if any symptoms arise during your stay. You might be asked to submit a picture of your covid test at registration on the day of the retreat. If circumstances change and additional requirements are needed to keep everyone safe, we will be in touch with you directly.

Weather

We expect the weather to be mild (temperatures ranging from 60's into 80's) during the day. The nighttime temperatures will be moderate to cool – 40's into 50's. RMERC is at 8500 feet and so be prepared for high altitude sun (bring sunscreen and a hat). There is a likely chance of rain and thunderstorms in the afternoon, so you will want your tent to be suitable for that as well. In the event of rain we will practice in a covered barn. Though not likely, if conditions require it, we will practice indoors in the meditation hall. Please bring a mask so that you have the option to use one if we need to move inside. Depending on covid conditions at the time of the retreat, we may request everyone wear a mask in the event we need to be indoors.

Housing Options

There are indoor spaces in the lodge in the form of double rooms and single rooms. There are a couple of glamping tents - completely setup tents, with beds, bedding and heaters. And two spots for RV/camper vans. If you plan on camping, you will need to bring your own tent, sleeping bag, pad, etc. Camping spaces will be dispersed throughout the site and the landscape lends itself to a beautiful camping experience.

More detailed information on housing options can be found on the [RMERC website](#).

Food

Three simple vegetarian meals a day will be provided from dinner the first day through lunch of the last. If you want a snack between meals, or supplemental protein you can bring a small quantity of packaged unrefrigerated food. Tea and coffee along with milk and sweeteners are available before and during breakfast. Please do not bring anything that needs refrigeration (medicine excepted). Excessive snacks are unnecessary: if you need a boost, a little gorp or an energy bar is sufficient for most people.

Some days we'll be packing our lunches after breakfast, to allow us to be on the land. Please bring a (plastic) container or two with tight fitting lids to carry your lunch in.

Figuring menus and quantities, shopping, organizing, and cooking are complex and crucial tasks for a retreat. We provide simple, wholesome, natural, predominantly organic, vegetarian meals. We can accommodate common food allergies such as gluten, soy or dairy, but not preferences. Make sure to include on the registration form full details of any special allergy or health needs you have beyond basic vegetarianism.

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 teachers is 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 Support

In accordance with that tradition, and in the spirit of generosity, Susie and Denise offer their teachings, time, and service. After the retreat, there is the opportunity for participants to offer financial support to Susie and Denise. By offering your financial support, you will support the teachers to continue living and teaching the Dharma. It will be warmly and gratefully received. You can donate by check, cash, paypal or venmo at the end of the retreat.

RETREAT TEACHER: Susie Harrington teaches internationally, is the guiding teacher for Desert Dharma, and serves communities in the Southwest near her home in Moab, Utah. She has trained in the Insight tradition since 1989 and in 2005 was invited into teaching by Jack Kornfield and Guy Armstrong. She has also been influenced by her practice with Dzogchen and Mahamudra teachers. Her teaching is deeply grounded in the body and often emphasizes the expression of mindfulness interpersonally and in daily life. Susie brings the skills of inquiry, relational dharma, and the psychological/spiritual interface from her training in Hakomi Therapy and the Diamond Approach. Believing nature to be a profound teacher, and a gateway to our true self, she often offers retreats outdoors. Susie has also been an outdoor professional for over 30 years, including years as a river guide, mountaineering guide, and backcountry ranger for the National Park Service.

RETREAT ASSISTANT: Denise Ackert has been practicing Insight Meditation since 1986, training in the US, India, and Nepal and teaching meditation at the Salida Insight Meditation Community since 2012. Her core teachers include John Travis, Brian Lesage, Susie Harrington, Erin Treat and many other Spirit Rock and IMS teachers. Denise has studied with teachers from other Buddhist lineages including Anam Thubten and Tsoknyi Rinpoche. Her background as a yoga teacher, body worker, and environmental scientist deeply informs her focus on nature and embodied practice. In addition, she teaches meditation in schools, jails, non-profit organizations, businesses

and on the trail. Denise is a graduate of the Nature Dharma Teacher Training with Susie Harrington, Mark Coleman and Gil Fronsdal.

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 an exception; retreat is not a good time to alter these medications).

Noble Silence

Meditation retreats are traditionally silent. The teacher 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 also 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.

DEVICES - You will be asked to either lock your phone and other devices in your car or turn them in for safe keeping at the beginning of the retreat. We suggest you bring a watch for time keeping during breaks and walks. Staying off the phone is an important aspect of retreat. **By signing up for the retreat, you are agreeing to this commitment.** (This is further supported by the fact there is no reception at the retreat site.)

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.

Practical Information

Directions to the site

Directions to the site can be found on the RMERC website. (<https://rmerc.org/>)

Arrival – 4pm Monday, August 11, 2025

Departure – 1pm Sunday August 17, 2025

What to Bring

- tent (campers)
- sleeping pad (campers)
- sleeping bag (campers)
- whatever you will need to sit and meditate comfortably outside - a cushion of some type, a zafu, blow up cushion, chair you can carry, etc. - and a mat, pad or blanket to sit on.
- a chair you use for meditation or dharma talks (if you prefer one). 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, wrap, and/or blanket for early morning and late day sitting
- fleece jacket
- puffy jacket
- wool hat
- sun hat
- good rain gear - 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 the lodge
- personal toiletries
- watch—not your cell phone, which is best left in the car—for use on longer free periods

- flashlight or headlamp
- slippers for indoors, shoes are not allowed in the lodge
- tupperware-type container(s) with a tight lid for packing lunches
- plastic / reusable travel knife, fork, spoon for trail lunches
- daypack or large waist pack
- optional: insulated mug for hot drinks (all other dishes will be provided)
- Bug net and bug spray

Emergency Contact

You will be out of contact with no internet access or cellphone service during the retreat. Please complete all personal business before you arrive. The staff will have the ability to make and receive emergency calls or emails on your behalf, but phone and internet are not available for personal use. The emergency number will be sent in the final email.

Registration and Payment Information

Please register online at www.deserthharma.org. Be sure to complete the Registration Form. This form includes medical and practice questions, and a release form. A deposit of \$180 is required to reserve your place which can be paid online or by check. If you are paying online please add 3% for the processing fee.

Make checks payable to **Sky Mind Retreats** and send to:
Sue Morgan
14382 Road 24.4
Dolores, CO 81323

****Using the online system to pay more than the \$180 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 your expenses.****

A non-refundable deposit of \$180 is due at the time of registration. The rest of your payment is due in full by May 11, 2025. If it is not received on time, your space in the retreat may be canceled and the deposit forfeited. Please wait for the confirmation of your accommodation choice before paying the balance due so you can make an accurate payment. Confirmation will be sent on or around April 29th.

Retreat registrations 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.

Your fee due on May 11th will reflect your choice of indoor housing, glamping, or camping. We will let you know the housing choice we are able to offer you and the full fee for the appropriate option is due at that time.

Sue Morgan, suedesertharma@gmail.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.

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 email describing your situation and how much assistance you need. Please address your letter to the Sky Mind Retreats registrar (Sue Morgen, suedesertharma@gmail.com). 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 teacher, 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 75 days or more before August 11th, opening day of the retreat, will receive a full refund, less \$180 deposit.
2. Cancellations 75 – 30 days before August 11th: we will retain 75% of the base fee for the housing option assigned, and refund any payment above this amount.
3. 30 days or less before August 11th, if requested, we will offer a refund of any payment above the base fee for the assigned housing option.
4. If you cancel from the waitlist your deposit payment of \$180 will be refunded except for credit card processing fees (if your payment is submitted by credit card). 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 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 do have some non-refundable costs such as a per person non-refundable housing cost and purchased food. We will work together on a case by case basis.

Housing Options at RMERC

More details on the [RMERC website](#). Housing selection indicating your first and second choices, is made at registration. We will let you know the housing choice we are able to offer you, on April 29th, before the final payment is due on May 11th.

Costs listed below are the full cost for this retreat.

Camping and vehicle sleeping spots: bringing your own gear for camping and vehicle sleeping spots. Total retreat cost for these options: \$750 - \$600.

Lodging - doubles (indoors) and glamping: For glamping, a tent and bed are included. Total retreat cost for these housing options: \$900 - \$750.

Lodging indoors - singles: Total retreat cost for these indoor housing options: \$1,050 - \$950.

Additional details on housing:

Details on all the accommodation types can be found on the [RMERC website](#).

Indoor accommodations include single rooms and double rooms. For all indoor options, bedding is provided. Bathrooms are shared.

Camping options include:

- Camping: bring your own tent, pad, sleeping bag and other gear you might need. Most campsites have (partial) shade. They are located down the hill from the Lodge and parking area. One needs to carry one's gear and luggage down a hill, and back up at the end of the retreat. One or two camping spots are near the parking lot. Campers use the bathrooms in the Lodge.
- Glamping: there are two glamping tents under the Lodge. Each tent has a single bed and bedding, small rug, space heater, light, small table, and luggage stand. Glampers use the bathrooms in the Lodge.
- Vehicle spots: there are two vehicle spots. People in those spots can use the bathrooms in the Lodge.

Questions

All the information you will need is contained in this retreat information document. If after reading it you have questions you can email the registrar, Sue Morgan: suedeserthharma@gmail.com.