

Meditation on the River

A river canoe retreat on the
Green River in Utah

RETREAT TEACHERS –

Victoria (Tory) Capron and Susie Harrington

September 24 – Oct 2, 2009

Information Document

THE RETREAT

Meditating in the Desert: This trip provides a unique opportunity to explore the power of a silent meditation retreat while immersed in the beauty and wildness of Southern Utah. We will participate in an age-old tradition of going into the wilderness as a support for spiritual practice and inquiry. Immersed in nature, we will use meditation practices to increase our receptivity to interconnectedness, preciousness and beauty that surround us. Through our enhanced openness and quiet, we will have the opportunity to explore deeply the truth of our own nature. We will be in a supportive community as we explore this inner and outer journey.

Spiritual Awakening: This retreat will offer a variety of sitting, paddling and movement meditation practices, and an opportunity for deeper exploration through group work and individual meditation instruction. This is a Buddhist meditation retreat with each leader bringing her own experiences to the practice. This trip will be held in Noble Silence and require a commitment by participants to this practice. Keeping noble silence for eight days in the wilderness is in itself a powerful practice.

On this retreat, the leaders will emphasize nature as our teacher, providing us with a special opportunity to open to the Dharma. The practice, silence, and desert will provide a natural support for cultivating our relationship to what is true and to the “other than human” world. Sitting in the beauty of the canyon country gives us ready access to spirit, wildness, and the unknown that can help reawaken our childlike awe of this most amazing world we inhabit.

THE RIVER

We will be a party of up to 8 or 9 canoes. We will spend 4 -6 hours on the river each day (though this is dependant on water level, wind, etc.)

Days will begin with meditation, then breakfast, break camp, load boats, and river time. River time is paddling meditation. Wind meditation. Sun meditation. Flowing on river time with our breath, sounds, flow, clouds, red rocks and river, skin, dirt and lizards. We will paddle with ease on the slow current of the river, as a loose group, keeping in sight and while enjoying our own silence, keeping the larger sense of our group.

Lunch is usually on the river. Afternoons we will have time for walking and sitting meditation, and dharma teachings or check-in circle. We will camp each night on a sand bar along the river. In camp, Tory and Susie will lead meditation sits, talking circles, and dharma talks.

There will be some opportunities to walk up side canyons while in camp or at lunch. Retreatants will each have a daily work duty to help the flow of the trip, and to provide service to all. Most duties will be cooking or camp related.

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:

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.
5. To refrain from consuming alcohol, illegal drugs, or other intoxicants.

TEACHER'S GIFT 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, Tory and Susie are, in the spirit of generosity, offering their teachings, time and service. The \$650 fee just covers the retreat costs: food, group gear, canoe rental, shuttle to and from the river, and other incidental expenses. After the retreat, there is the opportunity for participants to practice generosity in offering financial support to Tory and Susie in appreciation for the teachings. This will support their continuing to teach the dharma. It will be warmly and gratefully received. There is a suggested donation of \$50-100 per day while we're on the river. Please know that your participation allows these retreats to continue, and without ongoing support, the teachers are not able to offer extraordinary retreats of this sort. For more information and guidelines, please see the article from Robert Beatty.

TRIP DETAILS

WEATHER

September and October on the river will most likely be comfortable temperatures with an afternoon peak of hot temperatures. Plan for days in the 80's and 90's and cool nights (in the 50's). Rain, though not common, occasionally comes in torrents. During a storm, the daytime temperature may drop into the 50's, with gusty winds. Though usually not an issue there may be bugs - you may be grateful for a headnet.

EXPERIENCE AND EQUIPMENT

Participants need not have previous river experience; however, previous camping experience is helpful. You do need to be healthy and have sufficient fitness and agility to be at ease in a remote wilderness setting.

You will need to bring your own camping equipment. Try to keep your total equipment weight to 25 pounds, including a tent with a rainfly (or a waterproof bivouac sac) and a lightweight sleeping bag. A dry bag (to put gear in and keep it dry on the river) will be provided with canoe rental. Lifejackets will be available with canoe rental unless you prefer to bring your own.

A clothing and equipment checklist will be sent to all retreatants.

It is helpful to bring whatever will allow you to sit in meditation (an inflatable zafu,, a stack of stuff sacks, etc.) A Thermarest or Crazy Creek chair for eating, talking circles etc. (or for sitting practice) is highly recommended.

MEALS

Our breakfast, lunch and dinner menu is vegetarian and simple. Please tell us in advance of any dietary restrictions. Tea will be provided but if you have personal preferences, we ask that you bring your own hot and cold drink mixes (tea, coffee, Gatorade, etc.). Dried fruit, fresh fruit and nuts will be provided, but if you would like special snacks, you may bring them. Food, stoves and cooking equipment are provided; you should bring your own cup, bowl, and, eating utensils. Cooking, cleanup and other camp duties are shared. Please eat breakfast before we meet on the launch morning. We will provide lunch on the last day.

MAPS

Our route is covered by Belknap's Canyonlands River Guide.

SAFETY

Safety needs to be a primary concern for each of us, since what happens to anyone affects the whole group. Being conscious with every step is the best protection from injuries. Most river trip accidents occur on shore. River edges are slippery, and the transition between canoe and

shore needs particular care. While the river will be low and relatively mild, it is always possible to slip and fall in the river.

WATER

We will be bringing all of our drinking water, in large containers, with us on the river. Please have two one quart bottles for your daily water. All water used in camp for cooking will be boiled or filtered.

TRIP OUTLINE

The trip will take place in the spectacular canyon country of southeast Utah. We will be shuttled with our canoes and equipment to put on the Green River at Mineral Bottom and float through beautiful Stillwater Canyon to the Confluence with the Colorado River. From here we will have a ride on a jet boat, with all our gear, back up the Colorado River to Moab.

BEGINNING AND ENDING

The trip will begin and end in Moab. Participants will need to arrive in Moab in order to meet at 4pm on September 24th for our group orientation. We will leave early the next morning for the river put-in. We will finish on Saturday Oct 3rd at 5pm. You will be responsible for your own dinner and lodging on Thursday evening and Saturday evening after the trip.

There are many hotels, camping areas, bed and breakfasts, etc. in Moab. You may wish to reserve a place for before or after the trip. Camping is usually available at that time of year, though tight on the weekend, in nearby parks and public lands. To assist with sharing travel and lodging, as we near the trip date, we will send you a request for travel information.

TRAVEL BY AIR

Currently, there is air service to Moab from Denver, and connections beyond. The service is sometimes spotty. Grand Junction is the next closest airport and it may be possible to connect those arriving by plane with those driving through that town. Alternatively, there is a once a day shuttle from the SLC airport on the Bighorn Shuttle (888-655-RIDE). Other options include flying to SLC and renting a car (4 hrs drive each way); flying to Grand Junction, Colorado and renting a car from there (2 hrs.). (Unfortunately, there is no public transportation from Grand Junction to Moab).

RETREAT STAFF

Victoria (Tory) Capron, M.A. is a Buddhist teacher and psychotherapist. She has been studying Buddhism for 30 years, with equal amounts of Zen, Vipassana and Tibetan in that order. She has a Masters degree in Buddhist Studies and Counseling and has been teaching and working with both groups and individuals for 15 years. She has led groups in the outdoors for 20 years for organizations such as Outward Bound and the Women's Wilderness Institute, and been a backcountry ranger for the National Park Service. She is also an Emergency Medical Technician.

Susie Harrington has been meditating since 1989, and been engaged in Insight meditation practice since 1995. She has completed Spirit Rock Meditation Center's Dedicated Practitioners Program and Community Dharma Leader program. Her primary teachers are Guy Armstrong, Jack Kornfield, and Tsoknyi Rinpoche. She is also influenced by Adyashanti and her collaborative work with Tory Capron. She is a graduate of the Professional Hakomi Therapy training – a mindfulness and bodybased psychotherapy modality. She lives and teaches in Moab. She has been an outdoor professional for over 30 years, including years as a river guide, mountaineering guide, and backcountry ranger for the National Park Service.

TO APPLY

REGISTRATION

Registration is open now through July 15th. Your application plus a deposit of \$200 will reserve your space on the retreat. Reservations are confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. Please fill out a separate application form for each person.

Send to Golden Bowl Foundation. PO Box 17865. Boulder, CO 80308-0865.

The group number will be a minimum of 12, and a maximum of 15. If the retreat is full, you'll be placed on a wait list. If that happens, don't be disheartened, as there will likely be cancellations. The required deposit (fully refundable if you don't get in) is still necessary for those on the wait list.

Full payment is due by July 15th.

Cancellation policy:

On or before July 15th, 2009 you will receive a full refund minus a \$50 cancellation fee.

On or before August 15th, 2009 you will receive a refund minus the \$50 cancellation fee and your deposit of \$200 (total of \$250).

After August 15th, 2009 there will be **no refunds.**

Canoes will be rented for the trip. If you would really like to bring your own canoe, and you can provide full outfitting for two people, this will save you \$80 of the trip's cost. We will need to know ahead of time if this is the case.

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

You'll be sent a confirmation notice by email, and you will receive a list of suggested clothing and equipment. Further information, such as a map and detailed directions on when and where to meet and how to get there, will be sent with your confirmation.

TRIP INSURANCE

You may wish to purchase trip insurance, available at any travel agency. It will protect your investment in non-refundable airline tickets if you have to cancel or if the retreat is canceled due to circumstances beyond our control. Most policies also cover medical evacuation costs in case

of injury - a good deal for backcountry travelers, since a backcountry medevac almost always involves the use of an expensive helicopter, which you would otherwise be responsible for.

OBLIGATIONS OF RETREAT APPLICANTS

This is a non-profit trip sponsored by The Golden Bowl Foundation. We will all be responsible for our own safety and the safety of the group and for doing the work that is part of a wilderness trip. For this reason, please consider your physical condition. You will need to be able to take care of yourself, as well as be helpful to the group on a day to day basis. Because of the remoteness, in consideration of the other retreatants, we ask that you be in good health. Please evaluate your circumstances, and call or email if you are unsure of the appropriateness of this trip for you. You are expected to carefully review all information furnished, understanding that this is a meditation retreat rather than a recreational outing, requiring a commitment to noble silence and practice. Also, we ask that you understand as thoroughly as possible the physical and mental demands of the trip and the risks to be encountered and you properly equip yourself for the backcountry. Part of our practice will be to mindfully commit to non-harming, so that our impact on the environment is minimal and the rights and privacy of other retreatants are respected.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact Lauren Golten for retreat questions and logistics at (303) 641-6333, lagolten@gmail.com; or Jennifer Fox for payment and financial questions, at (303) 641-7424, jen.fox@comcast.net or see the Golden Bowl website at www.goldenbowlfoundation.org.