

Meditation in the Desert

Touching the Earth at Cochise Stronghold

Feb 16 - 23, 2024, Sliding scale cost (8 day retreat):

\$450 - \$600 Camping option

\$650- \$850 Indoor accommodations

Teacher: Susie Harrington

Cook: Valerie Holze

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 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 our cars away from our sites.

This is intended as a simple outdoor retreat, with supplemental indoor housing. Given the time of year, and the potential for cold, we are happy to offer this option for those who would find it more easeful to have indoor accommodations. 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, solar showers, compost 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 will 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 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 and snow are unlikely, you will want your tent to be suitable for that as well. In the event of rain or snow or excessive cold, we will practice indoors in the meditation yurt. 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

If you plan on camping, you will need to bring your own tent, sleeping bag, pad, etc. 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. **\$40 rental fee/person.** Camping spaces will be dispersed throughout the site and the landscape lends itself to a beautiful camping experience.

We have a number of alternatives available if you would be more supported in housing with more comforts than camping. There is a mix of housing. In order to keep the retreat more affordable for those that choose to camp we are passing on the costs that we are charged for the indoor housing, to those who will be using it. All costs are discounted for the retreat relative to the normal cost for a stay at Dharma Treasure. More information on housing options further down in this document.

Food

Food will be vegetarian, organic where possible, wholesome, and plentiful with three meals a day. There will be some protein available at all meals in the form of nuts, beans, eggs, seeds, nut butters, or cheese. 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 Valerie offer their teachings, time, and service. After the retreat, there is the opportunity for participants to offer financial support to Susie and Valerie. By offering your financial support, you will support Susie to continue living and teaching the Dharma and allow our cook, Valerie to continue to support retreats. It will be warmly and gratefully received. It is asked that if you will be leaving donations by check, please bring two checks.

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 Advaita, 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.

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 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 Friday, February 16th at 2:00 pm.

- 2:00 pm Check - in
- 4:00 pm Group Orientation (Please plan arrival to attend this group)

Dinner on February 16th is the first meal that will be served.

Departure – Friday, February 23rd.

We will end our retreat by 11am and there will be light snack food available to take with you.

What to Bring

- tent (campers)
- sleeping pad (campers)
- sleeping bag (campers)
- 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 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. Some chairs are available on site, so if you are flying, no need to bring something.
- 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 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 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 \$150 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:

Daniel Donahoe
739 Cole Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

****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 your expenses.****

A non-refundable deposit of \$150 is due at the time of registration. The rest of your payment is due in full by November 18th, 2023. 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 November 5th.

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 November 18th will reflect your choice of indoor housing 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.

Daniel Donahoe, daniel.deserthharma@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 (Daniel Donahoe daniel.deserthharma@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 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 60 days or more before February 16th, opening day of the retreat, will receive a full refund, less \$150 deposit.
2. Cancellations 60 – 30 days before February 16th: 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 February 16th, 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 \$150 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 may have some non-refundable costs such as housing cost and 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 let you know the housing choice we are able to offer you, on November 5th, before the final payment is due on November 18th.

Costs listed below are the full cost for this retreat.

Camping: bringing your own equipment: \$600-\$450.

Indoor accommodations: Total retreat cost for these other housing options: \$850 - \$650.

Casita Manzanita: Total retreat cost is \$1100- \$900 per person.

Additional details on housing:

Indoor Accommodations includes a variety of housing offered by Dharma Treasure. In all cases, bedding is provided. Unless specifically mentioned, bathrooms are shared, in some cases are composting toilets located a short walk from the lodging.

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.

Two rooms in the main house: There is a single room, and a spacious room with two twin beds that has an attached bath. (If you let us know that you have someone to have as a roommate, we will give you priority for this room.)

Kuti: A simple cabin with one bedroom and an off-grid bathroom.

Moon Palaces and Bell Tent: There are two private large size sturdy hexagon tents ("Moon Palaces") made with reflective material and synthetic down thermal insulation - single occupancy, electric heat is available if needed. And there is one Bell Tent with a similar set-up.

Casita Manzanita: A cozy comfortable eco-friendly straw bale two bedroom house – (one queen, one single) fully-equipped kitchen, sitting area, full bath with cast iron bathtub/shower, sliding door to outside patio, wood burning stove and front porch. This housing is specifically assigned as it is more deluxe and therefore has a specific retreat fee associated with it. (\$900 - \$1100/person) **For 2 people to share.**

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.

Questions

All the information you will need is contained in this retreat information page. If after reading it you have questions you can email the registrar, Daniel Donahoe: daniel.deserthdharma@gmail.com