

Travel Afar. Journey Within. A Zen Retreat

SCHEDULE

The following schedule is from October 5th till October 9th at the Tiziri camp.

October 3rd is from Marrakech to Doulmane Dades (High Atlas Mountains) with the visit to the 17th century Kasbah.

October 10th is traveling back from Merzouga to Marrakech.

Special event: October 7-8th : CAMEL TREK AND WILD CAMPING--camel ride through the golden dunes to reach the serene Obira Oasis. One night at this wild camp under a canopy of stars.



Morning: Awakening to the Desert's Silence



7:00 AM – Sunrise Sitting Meditation

- Warm up exercises for sitting meditation (breath work, chakras boosting)—Zen meditation. Breath awareness, cultivating a sense of presence in the silence and stillness of the desert.
- Practice the connection to your true Self by clearing your senses, meaning being present with what is beyond dualistic thinking mind, judgment, criticism, etc. We say in Zen, that when you are truly aligned in mind, body and spirit, even in the barking of a dog you will hear the universe.
- When you are in a different environment, and especially in the desert, your only compass is your breath, the direct link with your true Self.

8:00 AM – Qi Gong Session- Moving Meditation

- A gentle, flowing Qi Gong practice to develop awareness of your own chi and the Now, and to connect with the energy of the desert and develop a strong mind-body. This Qi Gong practice complements beautifully the sitting meditation (zazen). It is called “dozen.”
- 6 basic Movements of a Qi Gong Kata from Shaolin training for cultivating the chi, fluidity of consciousness, and one’s own affinity with the desert vibration. Be one with energy and conscious breath. The repetition of movements opens to oneness in mind and body.
- The Qi Gong kata is made of 6 movements that will be broken down every day to facilitate learning. The kata is your takeaway practice for the future. The more you practice the more you are open to a transformative experience.

9:00 AM – Mindful Breakfast

- In the spirit of Zen of the morning, let's share a simple, traditional Moroccan breakfast.
- Practice mindful eating and sharing thoughts and experience with others.

9:45AM – Morning Walking Meditation for Harmony

- A silent walk across the dunes, focusing on the sound of footsteps, or shifting of sand with the wind, the feel of sand underfoot, and the shifting landscape.
- Incorporate Zen mantras or else to deepen the walking meditation.
- Or find a quiet spot among the dunes for a short sitting meditation.
- Incorporate your Zen koan (given to you the first day) or use a mantra to deepen awareness. A koan is a Zen question that cannot be answered with a rational mind but through the deep self.



10:30AM – 11:30AM REST & Journaling

- Personal time
 - Reading of prepared material from the Handbook about cultural insights and poetry of the desert, etc.
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Afternoon: Cultural Activity with LUNCH

11:30AM – 5:00PM (different each day)

- Offroad discovery tour + tea with nomads--Visit in a Berber nomad tent. Engage with local Berber traditions
- Visit to "Ghost Town" of Mifis, an abandoned mining village with fascinating fossils of turtles, trilobites, ammonites, and orthoceras, remnants of the creatures that inhabited this ancient sea millions of years ago.
- Spiritual chants from the Gwanas (Khamlia Village), and Berber pizza experience for lunch
- Camel ride (participants will have bought or been provided with appropriate scarves / hats for the ride)
- Visit to High Dunes and Sand bread demo. You will witness a live demonstration of this ancient and traditional practice of making sand bread. And you will taste it as well!



5:00PM – REST

- Mint tea and cookies
- Personal time or group discussion
- Late walk in the dunes (alone or in group) to experience your own connection with the Sahara.



Evening: The Spirit of the Dunes

6:30PM – Mindful -Dinner

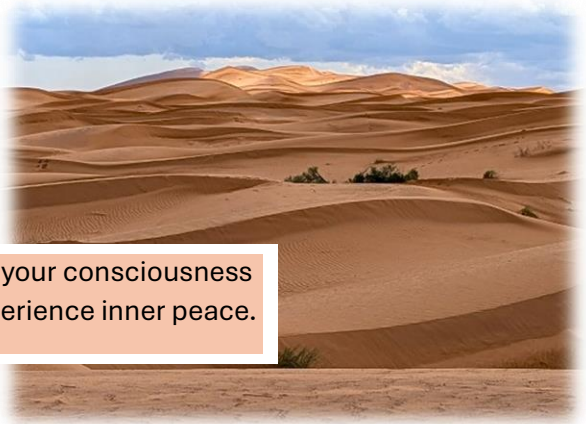
- In the spirit of Zen of the day, let's share a simple, traditional Moroccan dinner: tagine, couscous, etc.
- Practice mindful eating and sharing thoughts and experience with others.

7:45PM – Evening Qi Gong and 108 mantras

- Practice of the movements learned in the morning to install peacefulness and balancing the energy of the day. Qi gong kata will be your takeaway practice.
- 108 mantras (Om Mani Padme Um). The practice of Qi gong and mantras will help integrate the desert silence vibration.
- Experience the night silence under the night sky / star gazing (if weather permits)
- Campfire and Berber songs



Arrival at Marrakech. You may have a henna tattoo to start the journey to the Sahara.



Expand your consciousness and experience inner peace.

A desert spiritual chanting.



An experience outside time and space.

“Polish comes from the cities; wisdom from the desert.”— **Frank Herbert, *Dune***

The desert does not speak. I could not comprehend its tongue; its silence.” – **Pablo Neruda**

“The desert, when the sun comes up. I couldn’t tell where heaven stopped and the Earth began.” – **Tom Hanks**

“What makes the desert beautiful is that somewhere it hides a well.” — **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince***

“The desert tells a different story every time one ventures on it.” — **Robert Edison Fulton Jr.**

“In the desert, in the silence, you don’t meet anyone, but you find yourself.” **Berber proverb**