

Silence & Connection

A Desert Hiking Retreat

A Zen Journey Through the Stillness of
the Moroccan Desert with Plum Village

January 29th to February 6th

REGISTRATION

Plum Village

ABOUT

The desert is a place where silence becomes an ancient teacher and peace reveals itself as a quiet, enduring presence. It is one of the most powerful landscapes for contemplation, vast, simple, and timeless. Its sacred stillness invites us to return to what truly matters: mindful breathing, deep listening, walking in presence, and touching the wonders of life within and around us.

In the wide, unbroken horizons of the Maïdr Desert, every mindful step becomes a journey home to the present moment. The rhythm of our breath will merge with the rhythm of the land, as we walk together in silence through dunes, plains, and starlit nights.

This 9-day retreat is guided by the monastic sangha of Plum Village, organized by lay friends, and operated in collaboration with Désert et Montagne Maroc, a local team with decades of experience in leading mindful desert journeys. Over 5.5 days, we will make a gentle, supported pilgrimage through the heart of the Moroccan desert, a path of stillness, connection, and inner clarity. We will observe silence during most of the day, although it is not a full-time silent retreat.

There is a desert I
long to be walking,
a wide emptiness:
peace beyond any
understanding of it.
– Rumi



THE DESERT

The Maïdr Desert lies south of Morocco's Anti-Atlas mountains, a pristine expanse rarely touched by mass tourism. Its vast plains, sculpted dunes, and ancient rock formations offer a raw beauty and a sense of boundless space. Tamarisk groves and traces of nomadic life punctuate the horizon, yet much of the desert remains untouched, carrying a deep stillness that feels both intimate and infinite. Far from roads and villages, the Maïdr Desert offers an unparalleled environment for this deeply immersive experience.

We don't set ourselves a goal, or a particular destination, so we don't have to hurry, because there's nothing there for us to get. Therefore, walking is not a means. It's an end, by itself ... Each step brings you back to the present moment, which is the only moment in which you can be alive.

—Thich Nhat Hanh



WHO IS THIS FOR

Step into the desert for an adventure in silence and presence. This retreat invites you to pause daily noise, practice mindfulness, and rediscover the joy of being alive. In the vast stillness of the Sahara, we will walk, breathe, share silence, and let practice unfold with ease and joy.

We are calling:

- Adventurers of the inner and outer world, whether beginning in their mindfulness path or seasoned practitioners.
- Those who want to slow down, recharge, and rediscover the joy of simply being.
- People curious to blend practice with play: walking under endless skies, sharing stories by the fire, and savoring the beauty of the present moment.
- Creators and seekers who wish to explore how creativity naturally sparks once the busy mind has emptied into stillness.
- Anyone excited to live simply, laugh often, and connect deeply in a supportive community.

GUIDELINES

Retreat guidelines

- All electronics (phones, computers, tablets, cameras) will be left behind.
Expect a space free from distractions, no exceptions.
- Emergency contacts will be provided for families.

Physical requirements

- Ability to walk 6 hours per day on varied desert terrain and physical condition for it.

Living conditions

- Five days in shared nomadic tents (private tent option available).
- Bathing under the open sky, with simple shower structures provided at basecamp.
- Toilets will also be available at basecamp; while walking, the desert will serve as our bathroom.
- A return to elemental, minimalist living. Simple, but not without basic privacy.

What this journey calls for

- Stamina.
- Openness.
- A spirit of adventure.



PROGRAM

At a glance

- Day 1 - Arrival in Ouarzazate on January 29th, welcome, and opening circle. Sleep in Dar Daïf Hotel.
- Day 2 - Transfer to Maïdr Desert and begin walking retreat
- Days 3-7 - Silent walking pilgrimage (3-5 hours/day) with mindful meals, Dharma sharing, evening conversations, and rest under the stars
- Day 7 - Return to Ouarzazate
- Day 8 - Rest day at Dar Daïf with closing circle and integration. Optional Hamam and massage.
- Day 9 - Depart Ouarzazate on February 6th


PRE-REGISTER

SAFETY

Walking and camping in the desert has inherent risks. Our local team from Désert et Montagne Maroc has decades of experience guiding groups safely. All participants are asked to follow the instructions of the trek guide at all times to ensure safety for themselves and the group. Avoid unnecessary risks so the focus remains on mindfulness and presence.

ECOLOGY & COMMUNITY

We will travel in a fragile natural environment. All of your waste must be collected and brought back to town. Do not leave anything behind in the desert. Tips for camel drivers and guides are customary and can be pooled and shared at the end of the retreat. Donations of useful clothing or gear are also welcome.

A white, translucent cloth is draped diagonally across the frame, set against a clear, solid blue background. The cloth has soft, natural folds and catches the light, creating subtle gradients of white and pale blue. It appears to be hanging from the top right corner, with its lower end trailing towards the bottom left. The overall composition is minimalist and serene.

*What might you discover when
silence becomes your guide?*

COST

PRE-REGISTER

Contribution Options

In the Plum Village tradition, we invite you to choose the level of contribution that feels right for your circumstances.

1. Basic Contribution – covers the essential costs of the retreat. Choose this option only if the Sustaining option is out of your budget.

- Shared female tent/room: €1,800
- Shared male tent/room: €1,800
- Single tent/room: €2,500

2. Sustaining Contribution – helps cover costs and contributes towards monastic training, facility maintenance, and this engaged work in the world.

- Shared female tent/room: €2,100
- Shared male tent/room: €2,100
- Single tent/room: €2,800

3. Supporting Contribution – includes the above and adds a donation to Plum Village to help provide healthcare for monastics, fund essential projects, and maintain a welcoming refuge for all.

- Shared female tent/room: €2,700
- Shared male tent/room: €2,700
- Single tent/room: €3,500

Volunteer opportunities can be found in the registration form

LOGISTICS

Price includes:

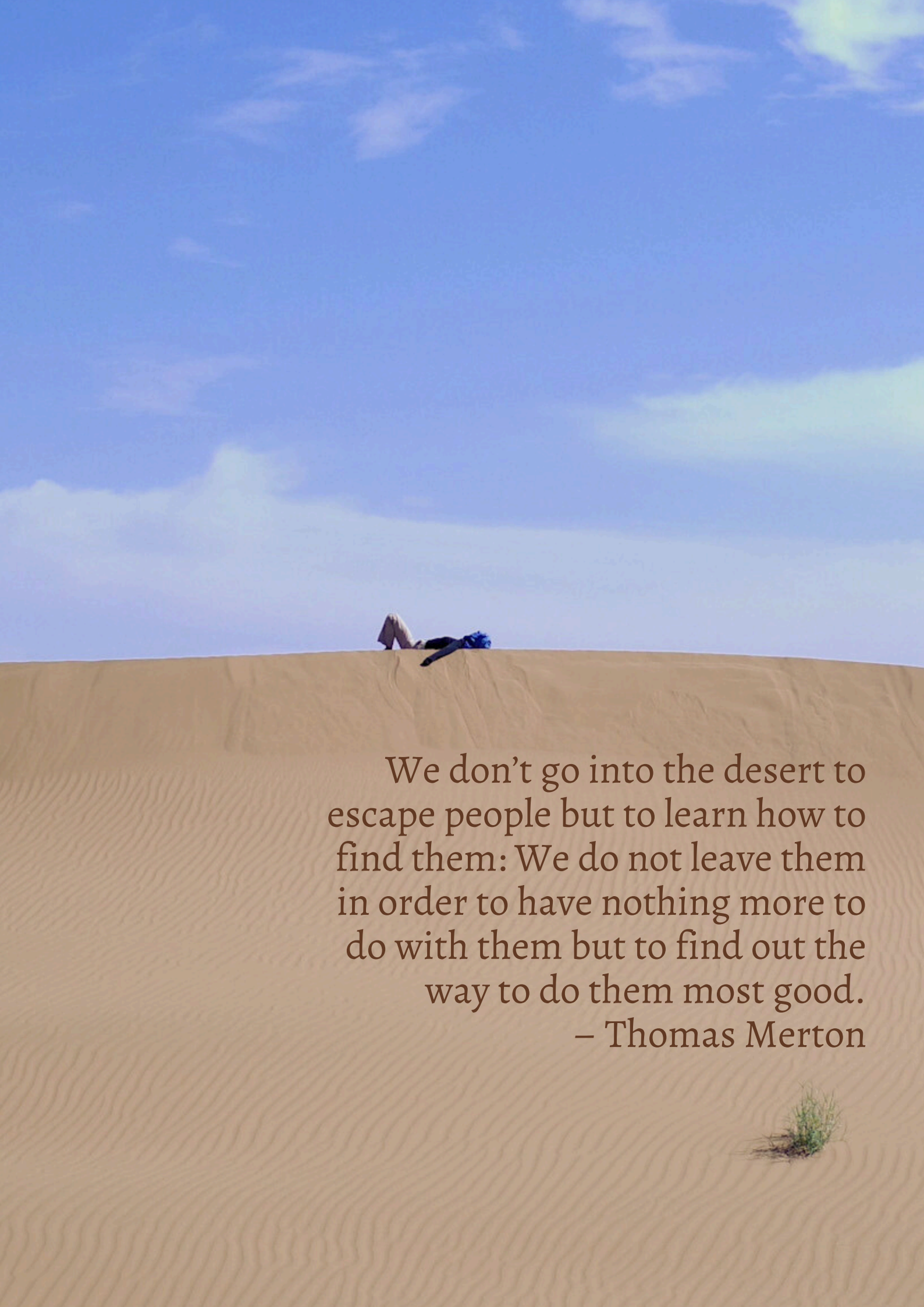
- Transfers from/to Ouarzazate airport or bus station
- 3 nights at Riad Dar Daïf in Ouarzazate
- 5 nights in the desert in shared nomadic tents
- Cold-weather sleeping bag
- All meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 9
(vegetarian)
- Guidance from Plum Village monastics and local desert guides
- Camel caravan for baggage transport and assistance
- All group equipment (tents, mattresses, kitchen tent, WC tent, shower tent)

Not included:

- Flights and travel to Ouarzazate
- Travel insurance (mandatory) - This type of insurance is mandatory: before your arrival, please provide a copy of your insurance details.
- Optional extras (private camel, extra nights)

Additional rental add-ons are available in the registration form

**FULL PACKING LIST AND
OTHER LOGISTICS HERE**

A photograph of a vast desert landscape. In the foreground, a large sand dune with fine, wavy ripples in the sand dominates the lower half of the frame. A small, dark, scrubby bush is visible in the bottom right corner. On the crest of the dune, a person is lying down, their body stretched out horizontally. They are wearing light-colored pants and a dark shirt. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered, wispy white clouds. The overall mood is one of solitude and contemplation.

We don't go into the desert to
escape people but to learn how to
find them: We do not leave them
in order to have nothing more to
do with them but to find out the
way to do them most good.

– Thomas Merton

GUIDES & FACILITATORS

Plum Village Monastics


Monks from Plum Village, the international community founded by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, will guide the daily mindfulness practices. Their presence and teachings offer a rare opportunity to experience walking meditation, mindful breathing, and deep listening in the spirit of compassion and joy.

Joanna Riquett

Joanna is the founder of La Sultana Tea House and the creator of A Mindful Tea. She weaves together tea rituals, writing, and mindfulness practices to create spaces of beauty and reflection. As a facilitator, Joanna will accompany the group throughout the journey, supporting both the inner and outer adventure with care, creativity, and presence.

Désert et Montagne Maroc

Désert et Montagne Maroc is a local, family-run organization with decades of experience leading mindful and respectful journeys through the Sahara. Their desert guides bring deep knowledge of the land, warm hospitality, and the wisdom of nomadic traditions.



*The journey begins
with a single step*

REGISTER HERE

Questions?

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