

# 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Wilderness Canoe Eco-Dharma Meditation Retreat

Labyrinth Canyon, Green River, Utah



**With Johann Robbins and David Loy**  
**Thursday, Aug. 27 – Sunday, Sept. 6, 2015**

**Cost Share:** \$735 by April 30, \$795 after. Some scholarships of \$100 – \$350 are available.  
Teachers and kitchen manager are supported by donations (Dana).

This wilderness canoe Eco-Dharma Meditation retreat on the Green River offers a unique opportunity to reconnect with the natural world. The beauty of the canyons and the spaciousness of the river naturally work to quiet the mind, while practicing meditation and canoeing as a group develop a strong sense of connection and community.

The unique retreat format is designed to encourage exploration of the ways that meditation and spiritual practice in wild nature can nourish an ecological and social consciousness based on wisdom and compassion rather than anxiety and anger. The schedule includes daily mindfulness meditation (including instruction), talks, experiential exercises, one-on-one and small group meetings with teachers, and ample time for discussion of relevant themes and experiences. The focus will be on cultivating a direct experience of being/nature, and will include a two night solo.

Labyrinth Canyon on the Green River is an ideal place for this type of experience. This remote wilderness adjacent to Canyonlands National Park in Utah is extraordinarily beautiful, peaceful and pristine, with 45 river miles of rock walls, secluded beaches, and side canyons.

## Eco-Dharma

These are challenging times. Progress on national environmental policy is largely stalled while problems such as global climate change, proliferation of dangerous chemicals in the environment, and species extinction worsen day by day. At the same time the influence of big money in the political world is more powerful than ever. Consequently, some people are experiencing weariness and frustration, and/or a loss of purpose. Some may feel trapped with no end in sight. Some may have sunk into apathy or despair. The truth of Dukkha (stress, suffering) is clear. And we have our path.

This retreat is not a forum for policy discussion, strategic problem solving, or organization building. It is a deeply personal exploration of what is motivating and nourishing in your life, and strengthening how you are connecting, both inwardly and outwardly, with spirit and nature. The retreat will help you deepen your connection to nature and your spiritual path. It will help you to become more connected, engaged and motivated, better prepared to face challenges with compassion and wisdom, and to find creative, non-dualistic strategies for working with things as they are.

The retreat is limited to just 17 participants. Here you will find complete information about the retreat. **To register use the separate registration form, and then print out this information and study it carefully.** If you have any questions after a careful reading email [johann@impermanentsangha.org](mailto:johann@impermanentsangha.org) or call 303-955-1136.

To help get a better sense of the retreat, here are a few of the comments from past participants (lots more at [impermanentsangha.org](http://impermanentsangha.org)). Please note that while Impermanent Sangha has been leading wilderness river retreats for 14 years, this will be more directly focused on Eco-Dharma than before, with more time for discussion and sharing.

*The synthesis of meditation and nature is brilliant! This has changed my path significantly. Wow, eco-dharma under a tree—eco-dharma on the river—who would have thought it could be so good.*

- Marvin Carter, Canyon City, CO

*I know how distracted I get living my busy life, with so much technology at my fingertips I forget where I came from. After experiencing the Green River Wilderness Retreat with Impermanent Sangha I see how incredibly divorced we are from the Earth. No wonder we are in a global climate crisis. It is important to take time to experience and remember who we truly are by living under the rhythm of the sky and stars, float and paddle down a river in silence, meditate, and remember there is no "me" or "you" without the beauty, cycles, weather and abundance of nature. If Ecodharma is a place you want to explore this retreat is well organized, safe, and the teachers clear and insightful.*

- Alice, Bozeman, MT

*Impermanent Sangha created a sacred container which allowed my natural being to merge with the consciousness of the river. I was supported by our group, and canyon wrens, great blue herons, lizards, and the wind. I feel more prepared than ever for my work and life in the world: Thank you so much!*

- Terry Kinsey, Chicago, IL

## Overview

This eleven day experience starts with two days of car camping on the Colorado River near Moab, followed by nine days on the river, with lots of time for peaceful sitting, hiking, and

paddling meditation, discussion, and a two night solo experience.

Labyrinth Canyon, near Canyonlands National Park on the Green River in southern Utah, is an outstanding red rock wilderness visited by few people. There are beautiful sandy beaches, shaded campsites, and many side canyons to explore and enjoy. The area also contains a wonderful assortment of wildlife, including great blue heron, eagles, hawks, canyon wrens, fish, lizards, desert bighorn sheep, and deer. For more information here is a link to start with (our trip goes from Ruby Ranch to Mineral Bottom):

[http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/moab/recreation/River\\_Recreation/LabyrinthCanyon/labyrinth\\_map.html](http://www.blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/moab/recreation/River_Recreation/LabyrinthCanyon/labyrinth_map.html)

### **Itinerary**

The retreat begins on Thursday, August 27, at 1 PM, at a beautiful developed group camping area just outside of Moab, UT. Moab is about a six-hour drive from Denver and Boulder.

We will camp there for two nights while exploring the basics of Eco-Dharma, learning specific ways to meditate in nature, and discussing safety and logistics. On Saturday morning we will drive into Moab and will be shuttled to the Green River. There is a secure place to park our cars in Moab where we catch the shuttle. We will be on the river until Sunday afternoon Sept. 6. It is recommended that you do not plan to leave Moab until Monday morning Sept. 7 (Labor Day), as we will not return to town until late afternoon, and will have a celebratory dinner together at a restaurant afterwards.

Lodging in Moab Sunday Sept. 6, the night we get back, is NOT included or arranged. There are many options, just search the web for Moab motels or campgrounds. We will also help coordinate for people wanting to share rooms.

### **Requirements**

The retreat is not designed to be rigorous or difficult, but participants are ideally expected to have:

- Willingness to maintain silence during daily silent periods, help out with necessary tasks, and cooperate with the group structure and the requests of the leaders and teachers.
- Some meditation experience is helpful. Complete mindfulness in nature meditation instructions will be given.
- At least some camping experience; whether it be car camping, backpacking, river rafting, etc. Does not need to be recent.
- At least some experience paddling a small boat. Canoe, kayak, sea kayak, or raft are all fine. Does not have to be recent or extensive, and you can get this any time before the retreat as well.
- Being healthy, and in good enough shape to camp and canoe.
- The necessary clothing and equipment.

If you are not sure about any of this please inquire.

### **Travel**

If you are coming from afar there is air service to Salt Lake City, UT, Denver CO, Grand Junction CO (about 1.5 hours from Moab), and directly into Moab. If you want to carpool from the Denver/Boulder area or the airports, let us know what you need or are offering, and we will help coordinate. If you are flying into Denver you will need to arrive Wednesday evening, as you will need to be on the road to Moab by early Thursday morning. Flights home from Denver need to be on Sept. 7, probably late afternoon, as you will need time to get back to Denver. Grand

Junction is a lot closer to Moab so you could fly in as late as 10:30am on Thursday, and leave the afternoon of Sept. 7.

### **Contact**

We will be completely out of contact and **totally unreachable** (including cell phones) during the entire retreat. Please complete all personal business before we meet on Saturday afternoon so we can begin the retreat together. We have both an emergency locator beacon and satellite phone to summon help in a serious emergency, but they are not available for personal use or messages.

### **Approximate Daily Schedule**

We will awaken at first light, hot water will be available, and then we meditate together for about 45 minutes. While breakfast is prepared we start packing up camp, then eat breakfast, pack our lunch, load the boats, and get on the river. We float down the river silently (paddling and floating meditation). Lunch is somewhere on the river. When we get to camp in the early afternoon we will unload, set up, and have some free time. Then there will be a sit followed by workshop type exercises and/or small group discussion before dinner. Dinnertime will offer optional areas for continuing the conversations, or silence. After dinner and cleanup, there will be another meditation, then a campfire talk/discussion, and sleep.

There will be a two night solo opportunity later in the retreat. You will be able to choose your own solo site anywhere from very close to base camp to a couple of miles up a side canyon, as you prefer. Full instructions and support will be given for the solo. Most past participants have considered it one of the highlights of their experience.

### **Eco-Dharma Topics and Support**

Spiritual practice will be supported by instruction in mindfulness meditation, with a focus on being in nature. There will be nightly Dharma talks and Q&A, exploring how living with things as they are can be brought into our spiritual path, rooted in a direct experience of non-separation and nature. The steps to actually doing this work will be grounded in a series of daily exercises and explorations, followed by small group discussion. Support will also include one on one meetings with the teachers, where personal challenges and issues can be discussed privately.

While this retreat is unique, many traditions have informed its teachers, including Insight Meditation, Zen, Eco-Dharma, western mindfulness, Native American, Soulcraft, eco-activism, and others. The focus is not on learning techniques, but on developing direct experiential awareness of being/nature, and bringing that into a new integration of the internal (spiritual) and external (activity). This will require honest self-awareness, and a willingness to look at established ways of being and doing differently.

### **Silence**

Every effort is made to support a deep and fruitful retreat, and silence is a valuable part of this. With exceptions for safety, logistics, discussion, and teaching, we will otherwise maintain silence while canoeing and during late evenings and mornings, to deepen the experience of the internal and external world. However, this will not be an entirely silent retreat, and there will be time set aside for talks, discussion, and exercises, that will help deepen our understanding of Eco-Dharma and the nature of spiritual practice with the challenges and issues we face.

### **Cost and Dana**

The cost of the eleven-day retreat is \$735 before April 30, \$795 after. This is set as low as possible to just cover expenses such as staff travel, canoe rental, food, shuttle, equipment,

insurance, licenses, permits and fees. It covers the salary of one staff member, but the teachers and kitchen manager are not paid.

It is our intention that cost not be an impediment to practice, and some scholarships of \$100 to \$350 are available. To apply for a scholarship, send a brief letter explaining your circumstances and amount requested, along with the full deposit amount and registration form. Your deposit check will not be used unless your scholarship is approved.

None of the cost share goes to Johann, David and Alice, who are solely supported through the Dana (generosity) of the participants. In the tradition of the Buddha, teachings are offered without a set fee, for donations, so that no one is excluded due to finances. In turn we ask that your donation be as generous as possible within your means. Because some people appreciate a guideline, a comparable 11-day river retreat with paid staff would cost at least \$1700: please donate as much of the difference as you can. (If you are using checks please bring two.) We are grateful for your support.

### **Helper (Yogi) Jobs**

During the retreat everyone will have a short yogi job. Some of the work necessary to support the group, including kitchen set up, take down, meal prep, cleanup, sanitation, fires, and food and group gear logistics will be handled by participants. You will be able to choose a job, and will keep it throughout the retreat. Most participants find serving others in this way quite enjoyable, and a great opportunity to engage.

### **Food and Meals**

Three simple, healthy and delicious vegetarian meals a day will be provided from dinner the first day through lunch of the last. If you want to have some small snacks between meals, or want to supplement protein with jerky or packaged fish, you can bring a small quantity of dry snack foods, and any **dry** beverage mixes (not bottles or cans) you want such as tea bags, coffee (and a small drip filter), cocoa, electrolyte sports drinks, or other powdered mixes. Hot water will be available before breakfast and after dinner, and we will bring some milk and sugar to add in. There is no extra cooler space available for personal snacks or beverages, so please don't bring things that need refrigeration, and please don't bring excessive snacks; if you need a boost a little gorp or an energy bar is sufficient for most people; any extra is wasted space.

To simplify lunch on the river, we will be putting together our own lunches from an assortment of food set out next to breakfast. In addition to your eating utensils, please make sure to bring one or two small plastic containers with lids for your lunch, to hold sandwiches, salads, chips, cookies, dinner leftovers, etc.

### **Special Needs**

Figuring menus and quantities, shopping, organizing, and cooking are complex and crucial tasks for river trips. We provide simple, wholesome, natural, predominantly organic meals. We can accommodate common food allergies such as gluten, soy or dairy, but please not preferences. Make sure to include on the registration form full details of any special allergy or health needs you have, and we will contact you if they require discussion.

### **Teachers and Guides**

Impermanent Sangha staff are all highly experienced and skilled in creating a safe, deep and enjoyable river retreat, and are deeply committed to supporting practice and Eco-Dharma.

**Johann Robbins, Teacher and Guide**, started backpacking as a teenager, and deepened his

spiritual journey on many solo wilderness trips in his teens and twenties. His passion is facilitating spiritual practice in nature, and he has guided and taught wilderness retreats and workshops in various traditions for over 25 years, including becoming a Vision Quest guide in the late 1990's. Johann founded Impermanent Sangha in 2002 and has led dozens of nature meditation retreats since then, including 16 canoeing or rafting on 5 different river segments.

Johann teaches Mindfulness Meditation, also known as Insight or Vipassana, with a modern secular approach. Johann has been meditating since 1974 and was asked to teach in 2008. He completed the two-year CDL teacher training program at Spirit Rock in 2012. His primary teachers include Shinzen Young and Eric Kolvig (who also helped found Impermanent Sangha and taught wilderness retreats for many years before his retirement).

**David Loy, Teacher**, comes from both the Japanese Zen tradition and Insight. He began Zen practice in Hawaii in 1971 with Yamada Koun and Robert Aitken, and continued with Koun-roshi in Japan, where he lived for almost twenty years. He was authorized to teach in 1988 and leads retreats and workshops nationally and internationally in places such as at Spirit Rock, Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, Omega Institute, Cambridge Insight Center, Terre d'Eveil in Paris, and Dharma Gate in Budapest. David recently received an honorary PhD from his Alma Mater, Carleton College, for his years of work on socially engaged Buddhism.

David's spiritual journey began when he lived for several years in a remote valley on Molokai, Hawaii. There he fell in love with backpacking, meditating in nature, and solo wilderness retreats. David is a well-known writer, whose books and articles have been translated into many languages. He is co-editor of *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency* (Wisdom Publications) and has written many articles and blogs on Buddhism, ecology, and activism. He is very interested in the parallels between what Buddhism teaches about our personal predicament, and our current collective environmental predicament. David's writings and videos are available at davidloy.org and at ecobuddhism.org. This will be his third year with Impermanent Sangha.

**Alice Robbins, Kitchen Manager**, has been on the river with Impermanent Sangha every year since the retreats began in 2002, and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience. For the past four years she has been managing food, logistics and cooking, providing wonderful meals for participants and teachers. Alice first started meditating in 1998, and is an experienced and avid boater, licensed river guide, camper and hiker, and has a deep connection to nature and meditation practice. She is a "recovering" attorney, having recently retired from law, and now practices family law mediation.

**Lauren Bond Kovsky, Cook and Guide Captain**, has always been fascinated by nature. With nearly 20 years of outdoor education experience, she brings intimate knowledge of the desert river environment. Lauren is a Wilderness First Responder, licensed river guide captain, has led river trips in several states and also worked as a canoe instructor. Lauren is also a regular national speaker and expert on western rivers. Lauren holds an M.A. from Naropa University in Environmental Leadership, and a B.A. from Bucknell University. This will be Lauren's second year with Impermanent Sangha.

### **What to Bring**

The most important thing you can bring is a flexible attitude, ready to cheerfully accept the surprises that weather and circumstances may present. It helps a lot, too, if equipment is good. **If you are unsure of what to take, please ask us. If in doubt, bring it and decide there, as there will not be an opportunity to purchase gear.**

THE GOAL IS TO BALANCE SIMPLICITY WITH MAKING SURE YOU ARE WELL PREPARED FOR ALL POSSIBLE WEATHER CONDITIONS. PLEASE LEAVE BEHIND NON-ESSENTIALS AND INSTEAD BRING ENOUGH OF THE PROPER GEAR. If you bring too many unnecessary or redundant items it won't all fit, or you will waste a lot of time and energy searching for things, packing and unpacking. Specifically please do not bring a radio, music player, ipod, books, stove, axe, alcohol or illegal drugs. Think about whether you really need a camera; if it is congruent with your intentions. If you must bring one, smaller is better.

Please keep your total load for the river to what can fit easily in one large dry bag (the size of a duffel bag, around 3500 cu. in., ideally with backpack straps). You and everyone else will be moving your dry bag in and out of the boats, sometimes in awkward conditions, and carrying it up the beach, so it is often easier and more enjoyable to simply have less.

Typical daytime highs are usually in the 80's or 90's, lows at night in the 50's or 60's. Though it is the desert, there is always a chance of rain, and/or wind, so be prepared.

### **PACKING LIST**

**The following list is typical essentials but you may want to fine-tune it a bit.**

#### **CAR CAMPING & LAST NIGHT IN MOAB:**

clothes for 2 nights car camping, left behind during river trip, plus clean clothes awaiting your return

#### **RIVER EQUIPMENT:**

Tent (if couple 1 per person for solo and privacy), small backpacking tent

Tent stakes: thin metal plus wide snow/sand stakes (both kinds, snow/sand stakes are a MUST)

Sleeping bag: summer weight or 3-season

Sleeping pad

Chair: Crazy Creek or other, lightweight camp chair for sitting. Also can be used in the canoe.

Lg. Drybag: best with shoulder straps, min. 60 liter/3600 cu. in. size, (everything fits in this)

Sm. Drybag: for day use in canoe, including lunch, sunscreen, rain jacket, etc. (easy access items)

\*\*If you don't have dry bags you can rent them with advance reservations from Canyon

Voyages, in Moab, (435) 259-6007. They can be picked up the day before we put in.

Stuff sacks (to organize items within large drybag)

Water bottles: Two 1 liter

Tupperware: with lid for lunches

Plate/bowl, Fork/Spoon/Knife, Cup/Mug

Daypack or Fannypack

Sunscreen and Lip balm

Hat (wide brim), + leash or strap

Sunglasses + leash

Insect repellent

Mosquito head net

Headlamp/flashlight (+batteries)

Watch (MUST have)

Emergency whistle (MUST have)

Small notebook and pen

#### **CLOTHING - RIVER:**

Water sandals/shoes that attach to your feet: Chacos, Texas, Keens, etc. (make sure they are broken-in before the trip, chaffed feet are painful in the desert.)

Long-sleeve and/or short-sleeve shirts: (2-3) fast-drying, non-cotton  
Shorts/pants: (2) fast drying, non-cotton (bring at least one set of quick-drying long coverage for daytime protection from sun.)  
Bandana  
Bathing suit  
Rain gear (top and bottom)

**CLOTHING – OFF RIVER:**

Walking/Camp shoes: comfortable, light-walking shoes or sandals (you want to have an alternative to your river shoes.)  
Socks: synthetic or wool  
Underwear  
T-shirts or shirts: (2), soft cotton, long or short sleeve  
Pants: for cooler nights at camp  
Sarong  
Warm layer: top and bottom, warm-when-wet fabric such as fleece, smartwool, capilene, etc.

**PERSONAL:**

Toiletries: biodegradable ONLY  
Lotion/Salve  
Medication(s)  
Small amount of snacks  
Dry drink mixes (see above, coffee and tea are NOT provided.)

**OPTIONAL:**

Small simple camera  
Personal 1st aid needs  
Scissors/nail cutter/nail file  
Leave-in hair conditioner  
An old sheet to sleep in  
Spare sunglasses/eyeglasses  
Spare hat/visor  
Extra batteries  
Extra sunscreen  
Wet wipes  
Tissues  
Caribiner(s)  
Camp towel  
Pillow or pillow case (or stuff your fleece jacket)

**The following items are provided as group gear:**

1. Stoves and fuel.
2. Complete kitchen.
3. Rain and shade flies for group.
4. Repair kit and group first-aid kits.
5. Portable toilet system and TP.
6. Canoes, paddles and life jackets.
7. Emergency locator beacon and emergency satellite phone.
8. Drinking water and backup water filters.
9. Three meals a day, starting with dinner the first day and ending with lunch the last.