

# Nature and Wilderness Meditation Retreat

## Eco-Dharma: Connecting with Inner and Outer Nature

Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center  
Jamestown, Colorado



**With Johann Robbins and David Loy**  
**Friday August 4 - Sunday August 13, 2017**

**First half now available Friday August 4-Tuesday August 8**  
**Just \$300**

**Cost Share:** From \$300 half retreat, \$650 full retreat. Half scholarships available.  
Teachers and cooks are supported by donations (Dana).

*Thanks to a grant from World Wildlife Fund, special full scholarships are also available for dedicated activist leaders.*

This meditation retreat in a beautiful mountain setting offers a unique opportunity to reconnect with the natural world. The mountains, forests and rivers naturally work to quiet the mind, while living and practicing together develops a strong relationship with nature and with each other.

The unique retreat format encourages exploration of the ways that spiritual practice in wilderness can nourish an ecological and social consciousness that is based on caring, wisdom and

compassion rather than anxiety and anger. The schedule includes daily mindfulness meditation (with instruction), Dharma talks, and experiential exercises. There will also be one on one and small group meetings with teachers, as well as ample time for discussion and sharing one's experiences. The focus will be on cultivating a direct experience of being/nature, and culminates in an optional two-night wilderness solo.

Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center and the nearby Indian Peaks Wilderness are an ideal place for this type of retreat. The area is extraordinarily beautiful, peaceful and pristine, with a wide variety of trails, wildflower-covered meadows, creeks, and peaks.

### **Eco-Dharma**

These are challenging times. National environmental policy is going backwards, while problems such as global climate change, the proliferation of dangerous chemicals, and species extinction continue to worsen. Meanwhile, the influence of big money in the political world is more powerful than ever. In the face of these challenges, many of us are experiencing confusion, weariness and frustration, sometimes with a loss of purpose, apathy or even despair. The truth of *Dukkha* (stress, suffering) is hard to miss. But we have our path. By developing wisdom and connecting with each other and the natural world, we can see more deeply, support ourselves more sustainably and tap into new sources of energy and inspiration.

### **The Retreat**

This retreat is not a forum for policy discussion, strategic problem-solving, or organization building. It is a deeply personal exploration of what is meaningful and nourishing in your life, which will strengthen how you are connecting, inwardly and outwardly, with spirit and nature. Our time together will help you to become more engaged and motivated, better prepared to face challenges with compassion and wisdom, and inspired to find creative, non-dualistic strategies for working with things as they are.

The retreat is limited to 30 participants. Here you will find complete information about the retreat. If you are interested in applying, **please print this information and read it carefully**. If you have any questions, email [info@impermanentsangha.org](mailto:info@impermanentsangha.org). **To register use the separate registration form.**

Here are a few of the comments from past participants (there are many more at [impermanentsangha.org](http://impermanentsangha.org)):

*“Johann and Impermanent Sangha are offering cutting edge Dharma through a form that feeds body and soul. They are taking mindfulness practice into a new era that is at once ground-breaking and timeless, heart opening and mind blowing. I am so grateful for those ten magical days; I'm looking forward to where Impermanent Sangha's wonderful approach to Dharma practice goes next.”*

-Lou Leonard, Washington DC

*“With Johann and David's steady hands at the helm, the group felt like an organism, supporting its members in a web of respect and compassion. When it came time for the solo, enough space had been created for me to enter fully into being at one with the Earth and all beings. Time was suspended. It was the high point of the retreat. The retreat opened me up to unabashed love of Earth in concrete terms because of the opportunity to engage in spiritual practices in a wilderness area of great beauty. The Dharma talks led the way, gently suggesting guidance for the journey. A feeling emerged that I could face into the harsh reality of climate change and environmental degradation, because I had*

*touched base with my love of the Earth and all beings. When you love truly, madly, deeply, it is possible to be present and face into calamity and to take action. This retreat gave new purpose to my life, and I am so grateful to all who made it possible.”*

-Jody Hall, Ashfield, MA

*“The retreat with Johann Robbins and David Loy was a remarkable experience on all fronts. It was a remarkable meditation retreat, a remarkable wilderness experience, a remarkable dharma teaching and a remarkable way to build sangha. After returning I am quickly becoming an eco-sattva.”*

-Much love, Jon Aaron, New York, NY

*“My experience with Johann, David and staff was fantastic and life changing. I still carry the peace, teachings and a new found eco dharma in my heart. I totally recommend this to anybody.”*

-Kerstin, Boulder, 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 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, be in silence, meditate, and remember there is no "me" or "you" without the beauty, cycles, weather and abundance of nature. If Eco-Dharma is a place you want to explore these retreats are well organized, safe, and the teachers clear and insightful.”*

- Alice, Bozeman, MT

## **Overview**

This ten day experience is based at the Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center, near the tiny mountain village of Jamestown, Colorado. It includes plentiful time for peaceful sitting, hiking and walking meditation, as well as group discussions, and a two night solo on retreat center land or in the adjacent Indian Peaks Wilderness. Although the retreat center has an indoor kitchen, dining and meeting rooms, we will be outdoors as much as weather permits. Most participants will be in shared rooms, though a few private rooms are available.

The Retreat includes:

- Daily guidance in the spiritual practices of Eco-Dharma and meditation in nature
- Sitting and hiking in beautiful wild settings
- Ample time for silence and contemplation
- Evening talks around the campfire
- Experiential breakout groups, with discussion
- Two night solo, with optional vehicle transport to wilderness boundary and adjacent backcountry solo sites
- Delicious vegetarian meals
- Your choice of lodging

## **Guidelines**

-The retreat is designed to be enjoyable, not rigorous, but participants are expected to have a willingness to maintain silence during daily quiet periods, to help with necessary tasks, and to cooperate with the group structure and the requests of the leaders.

- Some meditation experience is valuable but not required. Mindfulness in nature meditation

instructions will be given.

- Some camping experience (such as car camping, backpacking, river rafting) is helpful for the solo, but not required.
- Being in good health, able to sit and walk outdoors.
- Having the necessary clothing and equipment to enjoy being outdoors in a variety of conditions (we will be able to sit, cook, eat and have talks indoors if there are storms)

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

### **Getting There**

Our time together begins at the retreat center on Friday August 4 at 5:00 PM, with check-in and dinner. The retreat ends on Sunday Aug 13 with a celebratory lunch. If you are coming from afar there is air service to Denver CO (1 1/2 hours by car to the center). If you want to carpool from the Denver/Boulder area, let us know what you need or can offer, and we will help coordinate. If you are flying into Denver, you should plan on landing Friday by 2PM at the latest. Flights home from Denver need to be after 3PM on Sunday, as you will need time to get back to Denver.

### **Contact**

You will be out of contact with no internet access or cellphone service during the retreat. Please complete all personal business before we meet on Friday afternoon so we can begin the retreat together. The staff will have the ability to make and receive emergency calls on your behalf, but a phone will not be available for personal use.

### **Approximate Daily Schedule**

We will awaken at first light, hot water and coffee will be available, and then we meditate outdoors together for about 45 minutes. Then breakfast is eaten, and lunch food is put out (on most days we will pack a lunch in the morning). The daily activities will include sitting, walking, and hiking meditation, with instruction; and time for questions, sharing and discussion in small groups. Dinnertime may offer optional areas for continuing conversation, or eating silently. After dinner there is a group meditation, followed by a campfire talk, and then to bed when the sky is dark.

There will be a two night solo opportunity later in the week. You will be able to choose your own solo site from a variety of locations, some of which can be reached by backpacking, and others accessed by a short car shuttle. Full instructions and support will be given for the solo. Most past participants have considered the solo one of the highlights of their retreat experience, sometimes even of their life.

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

Spiritual practice will be supported by instruction in mindfulness meditation, with a focus on mindfulness in nature. There will be nightly Dharma talks and Q&A, exploring how being-in-nature can be part of our spiritual path when grounded in a direct experience of non-separation from the natural world. This work will involve a series of daily exercises and explorations, accompanied by small group discussion. Support will also include individual meetings with the teachers, where personal issues can be discussed privately.

While this retreat is unique, many traditions have informed its teachers, including Insight Meditation, Zen practice, Eco-Dharma, the mindfulness movement, Native American spirituality, Soulcraft, and eco-activism. The emphasis is not on learning techniques but on developing direct experiential awareness of being/nature, allowing for a new integration of the internal (spiritual)

and external (activity). This requires honest self-awareness, and a willingness to reconsider established ways of being and doing.

### **Silence**

Every effort is made to support a deep and fruitful retreat, and silence is a valuable part of the process. With exceptions for safety, logistics, and teaching, we will mostly maintain silence. However, there is ample time for talks, sharing, discussion, and exercises, which will deepen our understanding of Eco-Dharma spiritual practice and how it can be related to the serious challenges we now face.

### **Cost and Dana**

The cost of the ten-day retreat is set as low as possible and only covers necessary expenses: renting the center, food, equipment, insurance, and staff travel. It covers the salary of one cook, but the teachers and manager are not paid. Cost for doing just the first half is \$300, for camping or shared room.

Double Room or Camping(same sex, 2 people): \$650. Name roommate on the application if you have one. Camping is very limited.

Private Couple Room: \$650 per person, shared queen bed. Please name your roommate on the application.

Private Single: \$975.

It is our intention that cost not be an impediment to practice, and some scholarships (based on early bird camping price) of up to \$300 are available. To apply for a scholarship, send a brief letter explaining your circumstances and the amount requested, along with the registration form and the remaining amount (ie \$350). Your deposit check will not be cashed unless your scholarship is approved.

*If you are a dedicated full time activist leader and need a scholarship, you may be eligible for the World Wildlife Fund special scholarship, which can cover up to 100% of the cost. Please get an application from our Web site.*

None of the cost share goes to Johann, David or 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, 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 10-day nature camping retreat with fully paid staff would cost around \$1200-\$1600: please donate as much of the difference as you can. Please bring a check or cash. We are grateful for your support.

### **Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center (rmerc.org)**

RMERC is a new center that is still under development. We will probably be the first retreat held there. This will be a more suitable, quieter and easier location than we had last year at Beaver Lake, but there will be some shake out. If for some reason RMERC is not ready, we have an alternative location nearby, with somewhat different logistics, but also very beautiful. We will keep registrants posted as to any changes.

## **Helper (Yogi) Jobs**

During the retreat everyone will have a short yogi job. Some of the work that is necessary to support the group, mostly involving meal preparation and cleanup, 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 some snacks between meals, or supplemental protein such as jerky or packaged fish, you can bring a small quantity of **dry** snack foods, and **dry** beverage mixes (no bottles or cans, please) such as specialty tea bags, coffee (and a small drip filter, if needed), electrolyte sports drinks, or other powdered mixes. Hot water and coffee will be available before breakfast and after dinner, along with milk and sugar. There is no refrigerator space available for personal food, so please do not bring food that needs refrigeration. Excessive snacks are unnecessary: if you need a boost, a little gorp or an energy bar is sufficient for most people.

To simplify lunch on days when there is afternoon hiking or free time, we will be putting together our own lunches from an assortment of food set out next to the breakfast table.

## **Special Needs**

Figuring menus and quantities, shopping, organizing, and cooking are complex and crucial tasks for such a retreat. We provide simple, wholesome, natural, predominantly organic meals. We will accommodate common and real food allergies such as gluten, soy or dairy, but 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, meaningful, and enjoyable nature retreat, and are deeply committed to supporting Eco-Dharma practice in the wild.

**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: he has guided and taught wilderness retreats and workshops in various traditions for over 25 years, including as a Vision Quest guide in the late 1990s. Johann founded Impermanent Sangha in 2002 and has led dozens of nature meditation retreats, including backpacking, camping, canoeing and rafting.

Johann teaches Mindfulness Meditation, also known as Insight or Vipassana, with a modern secular approach. He 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 has led retreats and workshops nationally and internationally in places such as Spirit Rock, Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, Cambridge Insight Center, Terre d'Eveil in Paris, and Dharma Gate University in Budapest. David recently received an honorary PhD from Carleton College, his

alma mater, for his contributions to socially engaged Buddhism.

David's spiritual journey began when he lived 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* and has written many articles and blogs on Buddhism, ecology, and activism. He is especially interested in the parallels between what Buddhism teaches about our personal predicament, and our collective ecological predicament today. David's writings, podcasts, and videos are available at davidloy.org and at ecobuddhism.org. This will be his fourth year with Impermanent Sangha.

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

### **What to Bring**

The most important thing you can bring is a flexible attitude, ready to accept cheerfully the surprises that weather and circumstances may present. It helps a lot, too, if your clothing and equipment are suitable. **If you are unsure what to take with you, ask us. If in doubt, bring it, as there is no place to purchase gear nearby.**

THE GOAL IS TO BALANCE SIMPLICITY WITH BEING WELL-PREPARED FOR ALL POSSIBLE WEATHER CONDITIONS. PLEASE LEAVE BEHIND NON-ESSENTIALS. If you bring many unnecessary or redundant items, you will waste a lot of time and energy searching for things. Please do not bring a radio, music player, iPod, books, axe, alcohol or illegal drugs. Think about whether you really need a camera; is it consistent with your intentions? If you must bring one, smaller is better.

Typical daytime high temperatures are usually in the 70s or 80s, lows at night in the 50s. Since we are in the mountains, there is always a chance of cold, rain, hail, and wind, though those tend to be brief. We will be able to move indoors for storms, except during the solo.

### **PACKING LIST**

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

Tent (1 per person for solo and privacy, even if you are a couple); small backpacking tents are ideal.

Sleeping bag: minimum 3-season. Sheets, pillow and pillowcase for additional comfort.

Sleeping pad

Chair: Crazy Creek, Thermarest or similar, or a lightweight camp chair for sitting outside.

Water bottles: Two 1 liter, plus an empty one gallon jug (very handy for solo)

Water filter or purifier, or enough purification pills for the 2 night solo

Small tupperware-type container with a tight lid for packing lunches

Plate/bowl, fork/spoon, knife, cup/mug for all meals

A small backpacking stove and fuel is **OPTIONAL** for the solo. Solo food that will be provided does not require cooking, but you can bring a small stove to heat up food, tea, coffee, etc.

Backpack for solo (large enough for tent, sleeping bag, 2 days of food, clothing and gear)

Bear canister for solo food. Information about this will be provided by email after registration

Daypack or Large Fannypack  
Sunscreen and Lip balm  
Hat (wide brim, for the sun)  
Sunglasses  
Insect repellent  
Mosquito head net  
Headlamp/flashlight (plus batteries)  
Watch (necessary)  
Emergency whistle (necessary)  
Small notebook and pen  
Hiking shoes or boots, broken-in before the trip: blisters are painful!  
Other comfortable shoes for the retreat center and short walks  
Long-sleeve and/or short-sleeve shirts: (2-3) fast-drying, non-cotton  
Shorts: fast drying, non-cotton  
Pants: fast drying, non-cotton  
Bandana  
Bathing suit (there is a hot tub)  
Rain pants  
Hiking Socks: 3-4 pair synthetic or wool  
Underwear  
T-shirts or shirts: (2), soft cotton, long or short sleeve  
Warm underlayer, shirts (2) and pants (1), warm-when-wet fabric such as smartwool or capilene, etc.  
Parka: waterproof and windproof shell jacket  
Warm layer for under the parka, such as a fleece jacket

**PERSONAL:**

Check or Cash for Teacher/Staff Dana  
Notebook and Pen  
Toiletries: biodegradable and scent-free, please  
Lotion/Salve  
Medication(s)  
Small amount of snacks  
Dry drink mixes (see above)  
Towels (they are not provided)

**OPTIONAL:**

Small simple camera  
Personal first-aid needs  
Scissors/nail cutter/nail file  
Extra sunglasses/eyeglasses  
Spare hat/visor  
Extra batteries  
Extra sunscreen  
Tissues  
Caribiner(s)  
Camp towel for solo

**Please note, towels and bedding are not provided.**