



ENTERING INTO SILENCE

A Sufi walking retreat in the Moroccan desert

with

Karim Noverraz and Elmer Koole

FEBRUARY 23 - MARCH 3, 2020

For further information and enquiries: sufipilgrimage@gmail.com

This spiritual journey is a joint project of *Conscience Soufie* and *Agence Désert et Montagne*



INTRODUCTION

Sufism is a living spiritual path which found its origins long ago in mystical experiences in a desert environment. This walking retreat offers us an opportunity to experience how the vast emptiness and silence of the desert connects us with our own inner silence. As we walk into the desert, we are invited to leave behind our attachments, preoccupations and excessive activity, and orient ourselves to Presence.

This is the first time that Conscience Soufie is promoting a walking retreat for an English speaking public. It is open to anyone with a spiritual outlook on life.

The retreat programme will consist of Sufi meditative practices and will be facilitated by Karim and Elmer, two senior retreat leaders from the Sufi Way. Amongst other practices, there will be silent and singing meditations, zikr, evenings of poetry and story-telling.

The trek in the desert will be led by Zineb, a professional guide with a deep knowledge of the Moroccan desert. She will bring with her a team of experienced camel drivers and other staff, such as a cook. The camels will carry our luggage, our food and equipment such as tents.

YOUR PURPOSE

BEFORE THE TREK: We recommend that you spend some time between now and the quest contemplating your purpose in undertaking this journey. We have found in our own experience that the clearer and more articulate we are about our intentions, the more powerful and profound the retreat will be. Stay curious about what this journey can mean to you. The more sincere your explorations are now, the deeper your realization will be later on.

DURING THE TREK: We suggest that you can more easily reach a state of inner silence by avoiding superfluous discussions and by becoming more aware of your thoughts, feelings and sensations in the moment. To the same end, we will ask you to leave your technological equipment behind at the guest house.



BRIEF OUTLINE

- **Day 1: WELCOME AT DAR DAÏF GUEST HOUSE, OUARZAZATE**

- You will be collected by guest house staff at the airport or at the bus stop of Ouarzazate
- Welcome and allocation of rooms at the Dar Daïf guest house
- There will be some free time in the afternoon – for visiting the kasbah, the orchards, the terraces around the guest house or for enjoying a Turkish bath in the hammam
- In the evening we will enjoy a delicious Moroccan meal together and introduce ourselves

- **Day 2: TRANSFER TO THE DESERT AND START OF THE TREK**

- Breakfast at sunrise
- Departure at 7 o'clock for a drive of roughly 200 km. We will drive over the pass of Tinifit, and enjoy wonderful views over the Jbel Saghro and the mountain range of the Atlas. We will reach the merchant city of Agdz, then drive past the palm grove and Zagora
- We will visit the ancient library of Tamgrout
- We will meet the team of camel drivers at the edge of the Chgaga desert and share a picnic lunch together. Then we will watch the loading of our luggage on the camel backs. After that, the caravan sets off and the walk starts.
- After approximately 2 hours walking, we reach the dunes of Chgaga where the camel drivers will have set up the tents for the night.
- The meditation programme will be introduced by Karim and Elmer
- At prayer time anyone who want to join those who pray is welcome
- Then we will share our first supper in the desert
- We will meet in the evening for singing, poetry and other practices

- **Day 3 to day 7: TREK IN THE DESERT**

The following days we will walk through stunning and ever-changing landscapes. The Great Southern Desert of Morocco consists of plains, dunes and mountain ridges. We will walk through stony terrains (*reg*) and through golden sands (*daya*). At times we will encounter herds of camels and nomads living in their brown woollen tents.

A typical day will consist of 2 to 3 hours walking in the morning and 1 to 2 hours walking in the afternoon. Throughout the day, we will have meditations, contemplations, zikr and other practices. Three times a day there will be prayers for those who want to pray. In the evening we will meet around the fire, sing zikr and share Sufi poetry and stories.

On the fifth day, we will not walk, but experience a few hours of solitary retreat in the vicinity of the campsite.

- **Day 8: END OF TREK**

We will walk in the morning. After lunch, we will be transferred back to the Dar Daïf guest house.

- **Day 9: END OF THE RETREAT**

We will meet to debrief and share our experiences and meditate together for the last time. In the evening there will be an abundant meal.

- **Day 10: DEPARTURE**

After breakfast, shuttle buses will take the participants to the Ouarzazate airport or the bus stop.



RETREAT AND TREK LEADERS

Karim Noverraz:



Retreat leader

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Karim is a teacher within the Sufi Way and he leads a Sufi centre in the south of France. Together with his wife, he has facilitated several pilgrimages to Turkey and led weekend retreats about music and non-duality. He is a passionate musician with a deep interest in jazz and all Sufi musical traditions.

Elmer Koole :



Retreat leader

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Elmer is a teacher within the Sufi Way and has facilitated a variety of programmes related to Sufism. He has recently completed his training as a Vision Quest guide and has facilitated outdoor quests. He has done a MSC in Ecology and his professional life has been dedicated to conservation issues and international cooperation.

Zineb Boutkhoul:



Trek guide

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Zineb is a professional desert guide and the co-director of the guest house Dar Daïf in Ouarzazate. In 2008, she and her husband, Saïd, created the *Agence Désert et Montagne* which promotes a fair and ecologically responsible tourism. They offer a variety of camel and trekking journeys in the Sahara and the Atlas mountains, for instance long camel journeys following the ancient caravan routes. In 2014, the company received the Moroccan National Award for Responsible Tourism.