

# ENTERING INTO SILENCE

A Sufi walking retreat in the Moroccan desert

with

Karim Noverraz and Elmer Koole

February 15 to 26, 2025

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A Sufi Way associated program

retreat organised by <https://www.desert-montagne.ma> and <https://sufiway.org>



## 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 walking retreat is open to anyone with a spiritual outlook on life. The main language will be English, translations into French, Dutch and German will be available.

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 like 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 this end, we will ask you to leave your technological equipment – mobile phones, cameras - behind at the guest house. One of the participants will make photographs and videos for everyone.



## **BRIEF OUTLINE**

- **Day 1: Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> of Feb - 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
  - The actual retreat program will start early evening around a delicious Moroccan meal. We will introduce ourselves and the whole program of the retreat will be introduced by Karim and Elmer and all practical details addressed
  
- **Day 2: Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> of Feb - TRANSFER TO THE DESERT & 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 Tinifift, and enjoy wonderful views over the Jbel Saghro in the mountain range of the Atlas. We will reach the merchant city of Agdz, then drive past the palm groves in the Drâa valley and Zagora
  - In the city of Tamgrout we will visit the ancient library located in a traditional Sufi Centre and view the beautifully illustrated calligraphy works going back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century
  - Then we resume our drive along the palm groves and reach the village of M'hammid where we will have lunch. Then we will meet the team of camel drivers in the dunes of Sidi Naji. We will watch the loading of our luggage on the camel backs
  - After that, the caravan sets off and we will walk approximately 2 hours. Then, we will reach the campsite where the camel drivers will have set up the tents for the night
  - 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 around the fire for singing, poetry and other practices

- **Day 3 to day 9: Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> of Feb to Sunday, 23<sup>th</sup> of Feb - 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 zikrs 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 10: Monday 24<sup>th</sup> of Feb - END OF TREK & TRANSFER BACK TO DAR DAÏF**

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

- **Day11: Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> of Feb – DEBRIEF & MEDITATION IN THE PALM GROVE**

We will walk to a neighbouring palm grove to debrief, share our experiences and meditate. During the evening meal back in Dar Daïf we will close the retreat.

- **Day 12: Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> of Feb- 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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+33 (0)6 37 00 32 21

speaks English, French, German

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**

[elmerkoole@gmail.com](mailto:elmerkoole@gmail.com)

+31 (0)6 27 09 37 62

speaks English, Dutch, German, French

Elmer is a teacher within the Sufi Way and has facilitated a variety of programmes related to Sufism. He has qualified 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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speaks French, Arabic, Tamazigh

Zineb is a professional desert guide and the co-director of the guest house Dar Daïf. 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.

The company has had the HACCP food hygiene certification every year since it was founded. In 2014, they received the Moroccan National Award for Responsible Tourism.