

Ku Vonakala ~ Making Light

Service, Meditation and Yoga in Africa
A Retreat to be held April 18-28th 2008 in South Africa

With Denise Lurton-Moullé and Judith B. Miller

We hear so much about Africa these days in the news, we know of the poverty and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the poor rural communities but what can we do?

This retreat was created to give Westerners an **opportunity to know and to be of service to one small village community in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa**. Rooiboklaagte is the village where the women of the Mapusha Weaving Cooperative live and it is typical of rural South Africa – the nursery school is full of eager children but they have no toys, the women are full of faith and determination but they have no work. When asked what help they would most like the answer was English classes for themselves and their children, grandchildren.

If you would like to come to Africa and **have a beneath the surface experience** please consider joining this retreat. If the idea of working with a group of 10 who are in South Africa for 10 days to offer service and receive some of the gifts that Africa and the rural South Africans have to give please join us.

We will meet in **Hoedspruit** on April 18th and settle ourselves at the Kimba Lodge, which is a beautiful, secluded lodge in the bush. It is on the bank of the Blyde River and one can sit on the deck at dusk listening to the hippos. It is a perfect site for meditation and there is both indoor and outdoor space for yoga practice. We will have the option of cooking our own meals or having them prepared for us. There is a quiet, a depth in the bush of the **Blyde River Canyon**, which makes it a wonderful place to be still and receptive. While staying at the lodge we will focus our attention on **work with the women and children of Rooiboklaagte – teaching English as a start and seeing where it leads**. We will have daily meditations and yoga practice. We will have time to be in **this magical bush world where the energy of the animals and the rocks and trees is so much, much bigger than the human presence**.



One morning we will go for an early **bush walk** with a trained guide and bush lover at Moholoholo Mountain Lodge. One evening we will go on a sunset game drive at a nearby private lodge and have dinner outside in their boma. We will drive to the top of the canyon and spend time in meditation at this amazing power site.



It will be a different experience of Africa. Meeting the women and children of the village will touch you. Being in **the canyon, the bush, the game reserves (Kruger Park)** will give you an experience of the natural world that you will never forget. It is an experience that touches one's very core to sit by a water hole and watch the birds and the hippos; to see a herd of zebras and wildebeests, giraffes, and elephants; to spend time with a family of lions in the dusk or the dawn. After this trip you will hold Africa and her gifts and problems in your heart in a new way.

We call our Service, Yoga and Meditation Retreat: **Ku Vonakala. In Shangaan this means, to make light.** This retreat is about making connections, giving your gifts and receiving in return. We believe that this is the kind of action that makes our world a place of greater understanding, more compassion and true equality. To participate is to make the light grow ever brighter.

Itinerary –

April 18 – You will fly from Johannesburg to Eastgate airport in Hoedspruit. We will greet you at the airport and take you to Kimba Lodge. We will get settled in our rooms, have some optional yoga to “unkink” from traveling and have dinner by the fire under the wide African sky.



April 19 – There is a small Catholic church in Rooiboklaagte which the women of Mapusha have been attending all their lives. Our first trip to the village will be for the Sunday morning church service, a very good way for you to get a feel for the community and a great treat to see the children in their Sunday clothes and to hear the women sing. We will have lunch at a wonderful barbecue chicken restaurant in the center of the township and then return to our lodging for a quiet afternoon with rest, meditation and a sunset yoga practice.

April 20 – Quiet early morning at Kimba with time for a walk in the bush, movement and meditation. We will go to Mapusha where you will meet the women of the cooperative, walk the streets of the village with guide Emerencia and visit the mission nursery school, meet with a group of HIV+ women. We will return to Kimba and plan our next four days of teaching in Rooiboklaagte. It will involve teaching English, practicing English with the women of the cooperative, their children and grandchildren. It may be that various retreatants have special things to offer – help with accounting, empowerment training on some level for the unemployed women, help with design, marketing, help for the group of HIV+ women who meet each Wednesday afternoon. We will have a traditional South African poekie prepared by the Blyde River Canyon Lodge chef, Excellent.



April 21 – We will start the day at Moholoholo Mountain View for an early morning game walk with a wonderful ranger who knows everything about anything from birds to rocks to plants and trees and tracking.

After brunch we will go out to Rooibok for the service project. Sunset yoga and meditation as the day turns to dusk.

April 22 – We will work on the service project in the morning and in the afternoon head up to Edeni Lodge for a **game drive** in their reserve that specializes in the cats – lion, leopard and cheetah. We will stop for lunch at Mad Dogs Café where there is a shop with wonderful African arts and crafts. We will have the luxury lodge experience for the afternoon and dinner after the drive in the boma.

April 23 – Early morning yoga and a final day of service work in the village. After our work we will take a picnic to the top of the Blyde River Canyon, a breathtaking spot for meditation. Excellent will have our final Kimba dinner awaiting us when we return to the lodge.



April 24 – We will pack up our things and head for a celebration lunch prepared by the women of Mapusha. The women would love to teach those interested how to dance in the Shangaan style. We will say our goodbyes to the women and drive into **Kruger National Park**. Our first night will be spent near the Orpen Gate where we will drive out into the park at dusk to see what we see and then return to our rondavels to fix our dinner and sit by the fire listening to the sounds of the vast bush that surrounds us.

April 25 – We will rise with the birds and drive south through the park. It is wonderful to be in a virgin land as big as Scotland that belongs to the animals. We will spend the whole day driving

slowly through the bush, stopping to see the zebras, the elephants, the herds of impalas, wildebeests, buffalos and with luck, lions, leopards and cheetahs. We will spend the night in the **Sabie** camp, which is on a river, a wonderful bird viewing site that is green and lush no matter what season it is.

April 26 – We will complete our Kruger Park adventure on Sunday morning and after sunrise game viewing we will drive straight to **Field of Dreams**, the home of a family of 18 which will touch your heart. The children from the Tower of Love orphanage will join us at the farm and will be delighted to perform their traditional Swazi dance for us. You will have a chance to really see how two amazing South Africans, Sophia Jardim and Isaac Mothonsi are handling their overflowing homes. You will meet many children who have had their lives impacted by HIV/AIDS.

April 27 - Our final destination is the magical **Boondocks retreat center** up in the ancient granite hills of Mpumalanga. This one of a kind lodge is where we will complete our journey and spend our last day together walking the hills, doing yoga and meditation on the labyrinth that Stuart constructed in a natural amphitheatre, a wondrous outdoor African cathedral. www.boondocks.co.za



April 28 – You will be taken to the Kruger Mpumalanga Airport to catch your flight back to Johannesburg. Judy is available to assist with any extensions to your time in Africa that you would like to make – perhaps Capetown, a private game reserve, or more time at Boondocks. www.livinglowveld.com

April is the beginning of autumn in the Lowveld. The summer rains have abated and though it is still green the grasses are not getting thicker, they are receding and the heat is softening. Average daily temperature would be in the high 70's/low 80's and the nights could drop into the 50's. April is one of my favorite months, moderate and refreshing. There are few bugs and the nights are cool enough that a fire is delicious. It is good game viewing season and the tourists are few. Except for Kruger Park we will not be traveling in the malaria zone.

Cost: \$3,600. Everything is included: **all** lodgings, **all** meals, **all** transportation (except airfare), **all** guides, **all** entrances fees, and **all** tips. What is not included: airfare from your home country to Hoedspruit and return from Nelspruit, alcoholic beverages, laundry, telephone calls.

Logistics: You will be met at Hoedspruit's airport on April 18th and brought back to Nelspruit's airport on the 28th. We shall tell you which plane to take so that most everyone will arrive together and leave together. This trip is limited to 10 persons.

About Denise Lurton-Moullé:



Denise Lurton-Moullé was born among the Bordeaux vineyards into a family of winemakers. After earning University degrees in Law and Political Sciences in France, she came to the US and ran a successful wine business for 20 years. In 1982, she married Jean-Pierre Moullé, who has been executive chef at Chez Panisse restaurant since the mid-70's. Together they created tours to France, well off tourist routes, to places hard to find for foreigners during the summer months when they are not living in Berkeley. Learn more about these culinary tours at www.twobordelais.com.

During the past twenty years Denise has studied with several spiritual teachers and acquired diplomas in the healing arts including: massage, acupressure, Reiki Master, and clairvoyant readings. Denise has also studied with Leslie Temple-Thurston and is a graduate of the CoreLight Teacher Training Program. Denise has been offering retreats and pilgrimages to power places and spiritual sites for the last eight years.

These spiritual tours allow her to share her discoveries and relationships with local artisans with those who are called to reconnect to forgotten parts of themselves. Denise invites you to join with her and be touched by the energy of the land and of the native peoples. Contact Denise at denise.moullé@wanadoo.fr or (510) 848-8741 in Berkeley, California.

About Judith B. Miller:



I have lived and worked in South Africa for 5 years. I have been deeply touched by my time with the women of Mapusha and I want others to have this experience. Before Africa captured my attention completely, I was a yoga teacher and counselor in Portland, Oregon. There is nothing that brings me more joy than sharing this remarkable corner of Africa with others. It seems to be my dharma to create as many connections as I can between the United States and South Africa, a job I thoroughly embrace.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For information about this trip, please contact Denise at denise.moullé@wanadoo.fr

