

Finke River Yatra

Finke Gorge National Park, Central Australia

Friday 21st July – Monday 31st July 2023



'Yatra' is the Sanskrit word for pilgrimage. On this unique journey, in the heart of Australia, we engage with the dharma teachings of the Buddhist traditions and investigate our deep interconnectedness while travelling through the ancient Finke Gorge and along one of the oldest riverbeds in the world.

We will come together as a small community of pilgrims walking through this ancient land with its countless expressions of natural beauty. The yatra will be based on the spirit of simplicity and in that we let go of the usual luxuries of life. Apart from the walking periods the yatra will also provide periods of time for sitting meditation, facilitated activities, sharing circles, a daily yoga practice, art, music and celebration.

The yatra will provide a safe and caring environment where we can explore and exchange our individual experiences and wisdom with likeminded people. The timeless landscape of Central Australia will provide an ideal setting for this sacred exploration.

Our Journey

Set in the Finke Gorge National Park of Central Australia, our journey will take us from the renowned oasis of 'Palm Valley' to the remote 'Running Waters' waterhole following the riverbed of the 'Finke'. Weaving our way through this special landscape, will give a unique experience of Australian wilderness.

There will be a mix of full walking days and stationary days allowing opportunity to sink into our time in the desert. On the walking days you will carry a daypack with lunch, water and whatever else you might need during the walk. These walks will vary between 10 to 25 kilometers and while there is not much steep terrain there are uneven, tough, sandy sections classified as difficult.

The yatra is an all-weather event. Rainfall is highly unlikely that time of the year, day temperatures are usually pleasant (20 degrees), the nights are very cold and could drop below zero. All nights we will be accommodated in our personal tents. An accompanying support team will provide hearty vegetarian meals, transport our luggage and take care of logistics. At times help will be required with food preparation, clean-up, and setting up/packing down our camp.

Facilitation

Ronny Hickel has studied, practised and taught in various traditions of yoga, and buddhist dharma for the last 25 years. He is a yoga and tai-chi instructor, a qualified outdoor recreation guide and has trained in Hakomi Psychotherapy. Originally from Austria, Ronny moved to Australia in 2000 after living in India and South East Asia for numerous years. His approach is shaped by his love and passion for the wilderness, nature connection, deep ecology and the rich spiritual traditions of the world including tribal traditions, buddhism, yoga and modern science. He now resides in the Tweed Caldera where he works in personal development and outdoor recreation, facilitating meditation, yoga and tai-chi classes, nature reconnection retreats, MenAware gatherings and yatras.

Emma Pittaway has been practicing Buddhist meditation since 1999. Inspired by the Buddha and his followers, who lived and meditated in the forest, she draws on the natural world to support her practice, and teaches an open 'natural awareness' approach based on the teachings of Sayadaw U Tejaniya. She is a regular teacher at the Kuan Yin Meditation Centre in Lismore and leads retreats with Patrick Kearney, her primary teacher and mentor.

The yatra will be conducted under the shelter of Buddhist ethics which create a safe, caring and conscious environment for spiritual practice. On the yatra the precepts invite us to restrain from harmful speech and actions, sexual expression and intoxicants. The majority of our yatra program will be supported by noble silence. The meditation instructions are primarily grounded in the Insight Meditation method. The yoga and movement exercises are suitable for all levels and are designed to nourish our physical condition and assist our mindfulness practice.



What to bring?

- tent
- warm sleeping bag (minus 5 degrees comfort)
- camping mat (thermarest) including repair kit
- sun hat, beanie, gloves and rain/wind coat
- appropriate clothing for hot and very cold weather (be prepared for minus zero degrees)
- hiking shoes (walked in, not causing blisters!)
- daypack for walking
- water bottles, 2L minimum, 3L recommended
- cup, bowl, plate, cutlery
- lunch box
- meditation stool/cushion, blanket/shawl
- sun screen, insect repellent
- torch and spare batteries
- toiletries, towel, swim wear
- blister bandaids
- any personal medication or supplements if required.

Pack lightly and tightly – Your luggage is handled by the support crew and transported to each new camp site. Please keep your luggage confined to one bag preferable, two bags maximum.

Getting there

The yatra will start on Friday 21st July

We will meet outside the 'Alice Springs Tourist Park' in Alice Springs at 1.30pm.

The Alice Springs Tourist Park is situated opposite the Araluen Cultural Centre and offers budget accommodation and campsites (alicespringstouristpark.com.au).

For participants who fly in on the day we will arrange a pick up service from Alice Springs Airport at 1pm. Please make sure your flight arrives before 12.30pm on the day.

It is important that you arrive at our meeting point on time. From there we will transport all participants the 140km to our first camp at Palm Valley Campground. We will arrive there around 4pm to settle into camp. Dinner will be served at 6pm.

Flights to Alice Springs are very limited. As we are travelling in peak season we recommend that you book your flight as soon your place on the yatra is confirmed. However please do not make any travel arrangements before your place on the yatra has been confirmed.

The yatra will end on Monday 31st July.

We will arrive back at the 'Alice Springs Tourist Park' around 5pm.

We will also provide transport directly back to the Alice Springs airport aiming to arrive there around 5pm. To be safe please book your return flight for after this time.

Cost: \$1700 base fee & Dana

The **BASE FEE** covers all meals and catering, hiring of support vehicles and equipment, all camping and national park fees, administration cost and some travel expenses of the team.

This base fee does not include any payment for the facilitators and organisers.

DANA means generosity and forms a substantial aspect of providing this yatra. Following an old Buddhist tradition the facilitators & organisers of this yatra do not charge a fixed fee for their contributions, but offer their services as a gift. At the end of the yatra there will be an opportunity to offer dana in the form of a monetary gift in return. Dana supports the livelihood of yatra facilitators & organisers, keeps the dharma accessible and affordable, and cultivates a spirit of generosity.



How to book

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT AS WE ARE IN A REMOTE LOCATION A GOOD LEVEL OF FITNESS AND HIKING EXPERIENCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR THIS YATRA!

1. Read this Information Document thoroughly.
2. Fill out & submit the online [APPLICATION FORM](#). Applications are open from 9am, Monday 10th April onward.
3. Out of the applications we will select 26 participants. Remaining applicants will be placed on a waiting list. We will contact you within 7 days via email if your application has been successful.
4. If your application has been accepted we will provide payment details and you will have 3 days to secure your place by making full payment.
If we do not receive a payment after 3 days your place may be forwarded to someone else on the waiting list.
Please contact us if you wish to arrange an alternative payment plan.
5. You will receive a confirmation email to confirm your booking once your funds have arrived.
Please do not make a payment or any travel arrangements unless you have been confirmed a place on the yatra.

Our Cancellation Policy:

Cancellations before the 21st June 2023 will receive a full refund minus a \$50 administration fee. Unfortunately we are not able to offer any refunds for cancellations received after 21st June. If you need to cancel please make sure you inform us in time so that your place can be offered to someone else.



For more information please email yatracontact@gmail.com

yatra.org.au