

Shaanti Holistic Health Retreat Ltd Hosts the Africa Yoga Project – Journey into Power with Baron Baptiste

“When you pray, move your feet” – African Proverb



This April 20-28th, Baron Baptiste and a team of dedicated and inspired volunteers travelled to Nairobi, Kenya to lead a Journey into Power of a lifetime. Joining with Africa Yoga Project, a US-based not-for-profit organization, Baron and the team will lead the first ever yoga teacher training in East Africa for Kenyans.

All from marginalized backgrounds, the students that will attend the Level 1 Teacher Training in Kenya are ripe to receive the gift of yoga. Each student, boys and girls, men and women, is a community leader in the slums from which they hail. They are in the circle of influence in areas where poverty runs rampant; running water and electricity are rare; open sewage trenches and disease are common. These students are the future leaders, educators, and grass-root activists of Kenya. They are each committed to using yoga to empower themselves and their communities.

The Baptiste team of volunteer assistants is also making a commitment. As yoga teachers and studio owners, they are community builders and are each taking on a leadership role in their own circle of influence. The team members will put their lives at home on hold, enroll their individual communities in their support, and work together to create new possibilities for themselves and their students.

During their time in Kenya, the team will travel to three different areas of Kenya. They will learn about life in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya and teach yoga there; they will visit with the Massai families where Africa Yoga Project built two schools in Amboselli National Park; and they will hold a free five-day teacher training for local Kenyans at **Shaanti Holistic Health Retreat Ltd**, Diani Beach along the Indian Ocean, one of the world's most beautiful beaches. Shaanti was chosen as the best location for this project because of the ethos of the retreat and because it is the only real yoga retreat in Eastern Africa. Africa Yoga Project and Shaanti share the vision and commitment to yoga and to our fellow Kenyans alike.

ABOUT SHAANTI HOLISTIC HEALTH RETREAT LTD



Shaanti is a culmination of the dreams of many people, an anthropologist, an engineer, a yogi, a Dutch artist, a filmmaker, an economist, a musician, a spiritual seeker and a social entrepreneur. More importantly it included the dreams of local artisans of Kwale, the bricklayers, the masons, the artists, the candle stick makers and many more. To all we say a great big "Asante" for bringing in their collective energy to create this haven of peace

Surrounded by this energy, the concept of Shaanti Holistic Health Retreat was born. After that, a universal flow took over with a wave of serendipitous events. The right manager, the right yoga therapist and practitioner, the right designer, landscape artist and local artisans from Kwale came to us as if they had lain in wait for just such a project. As with all the staff working at Shaanti, they all had

something unique and special about them and were driven by the same compassionate energy for people and health, for well being and quality, for service and trust.

Set on the stunningly white beaches of Diani, Shaanti Retreat is a boutique hotel with only 8 rooms, designed to provide every guest with a choice of places, treatments and activities so they can find their own personal pathway to peace. Whether it is watching the sun set at the oyster bar with a chilled glass of white wine.... A sunrise yoga session... an ayurvedic massage... a walk on the beach or simply lying on a deck chair and reading... this is the place for you.

Meals are truly thrilling delights from all over the world, veritable surprises for the palate and designed to ensure that your mouth gets a taste of what your mind, body and soul are experiencing while you're at Shaanti!

Peace offerings include:

Yoga, Meditation, Pranayama, Mind Sound Resonance Therapy, Star Baths, Mud bath, Ayurvedic massage, Reflexology , Relaxing massage, Swedish massage, Aromatherapy massage, Shaanti Natural facial, Himalaya Facial, hot Jacuzzi, swimming pool, Buddha on the Beach seafood restaurant, The Moist Oyster, moonlight beach dinners and much more...

Shaanti has, in its short existence of 4 years, become known as a tourist retreat which has held strongly to its commitment to the environment, to the enhancement of the communities around it and to service through hospitality.

The goal of the Africa Yoga Project is to make a permanent difference in the lives of others by sharing what has so significantly impacted the team's own lives – Yoga and Service. This core group of assistants will take a stand for bringing yoga and power to all, no matter where or how they live, RIGHT NOW!



The Commitment:

Africa Yoga Project is a not-for-profit project. The amazing people at Africa Yoga Project have been fundraising tirelessly to bring movement and possibility to some of the world's most poorest youth. The team will join in this movement by committing to raise \$5000 each, in addition to paying for their own travel expenses.

What follows are some of the testimonials about others' experiences with AYP in Kenya. We encourage you to ask questions and just let your heart lead

Volunteers' Experiences with Africa Yoga Project:

“Relinquish expectations, embrace exchanges. While volunteering for the Africa Yoga Project in Kenya this past December, those words became my mantra. Each day was a new experience and very different

from the next. At times I'd feel a heart wrenching pang of helplessness, only to be replaced by a triumphant swelling of inspiration. And all the while, my mantra kept running through my mind. Exchanges happen every minute in Kenya. Taxi drivers shake your hand, children playing in the street pause to inquire, 'how are you?' After the first day of meeting some of the yoga students, the greeting became a hug rather than "Jambo." I went to Kenya to teach yoga, but Kenya ended up teaching me about yoga too. This journey awakened me to several things. Most notably, I experienced first hand the incredible power of yoga. Yoga is more than physical asana. Yoga has the ability to create. Be it peace, openness, community. Yoga has the ability to inspire. To act, to share, to be. Yoga has the ability to change. A thought, a deed, a person. All of these different facets of yoga were revealed to me while volunteering with Africa Yoga Project. Through Paige's dedication of heart and soul, this project continually impacts a growing population in Kenya- a population committed to making a better life for themselves. I greatly admire the strength, courage and compassion I encountered along my journey as I relinquished expectations, embraced exchanges, and discovered yoga in action- on and off the mat."

-Melanie McCaffrey



"In April 2007, I went to Kenya with Paige Elenson. For the last year, she had been telling me about her amazing, life changing experiences with her new friends and community in Kenya. I was very excited to be able to go to share in those experiences that Paige had been telling me about. I went to Kenya for two weeks, enough time to truly experience the people, the culture, and to see the country. The first night I arrived, Paige met me at the airport with some of the Nafsi acrobats and Down-Dog girls. I was later introduced to about 20 people in her community. Immediately upon arrival, they said to me: "Ryan, you are our brother now." Those words were such a profound gesture, they still ring fresh to me today. At that moment, I understood what Paige's efforts were all about. It was about bringing together people to unite, to grow, to share, and to love one another. Kenya has its share of social inequality, violence, and tribal hostilities, but I understood that Paige's efforts were there to transcend all of the separation, and to strengthen the human connectedness."

-Ryan

"In May 2007 I had the opportunity to visit Kenya and was invited to share some yoga classes . . . I remember turning up to this warehouse space in the middle of an industrial area in the city, it was hot, it was dusty and there were young kids everywhere, some sitting around listening to hip hop, others breakdancing, doing acrobatics and capoeira. It was a dynamic scene. The kids had some experience with yoga but I wasn't sure how it was all going to play out. Any doubts I had were put to rest by the open-hearted, welcoming nature, and big smiles from these guys.

We did the class, about 30 - 50 of them, barefoot on the old, dusty wooden planks on top of the concrete, I'm not sure how much English they understood, but they were really focused, very sincere and committed to learning. They were open-minded and inquisitive, appreciative and excellent students.

After the class we all sat around and they asked me questions about yoga, about lifestyle, about practice - demonstrating their eagerness and desire to incorporate yoga not only as a way to enhance their performances, but to improve their lives.

I would say that my experience . . . was one of the most rewarding and inspiring of any I've had teaching yoga over the last 8 years.....”

-Mark



“Our Mission

To empower youth, build a global community and increase well-being in East Africa.

We have introduced hundreds of students in Kenya to the practice of yoga, as well provide educational scholarships, job training food stipends, temporary housing and health services.

Our core group of students are from impoverished backgrounds in Nairobi, Kenya, are between 16-30 years old and live on under \$2 per day. Many are personally affected by HIV/AIDS and are living/have once lived on the streets.

Yoga reveals our authentic selves, perfect and flawed, uncovers our limitless potential to embrace change and to take action. The practice of yoga does not only work for upper class westerners, but for Kenyans too. Yoga transforms limitations into power.

Yoga revolutionizes our body, our emotions, our relationships and our ability to serve the greater good”

- From the Africa Yoga web site.

www.shaantihhr.com

www.africayogaproject.org