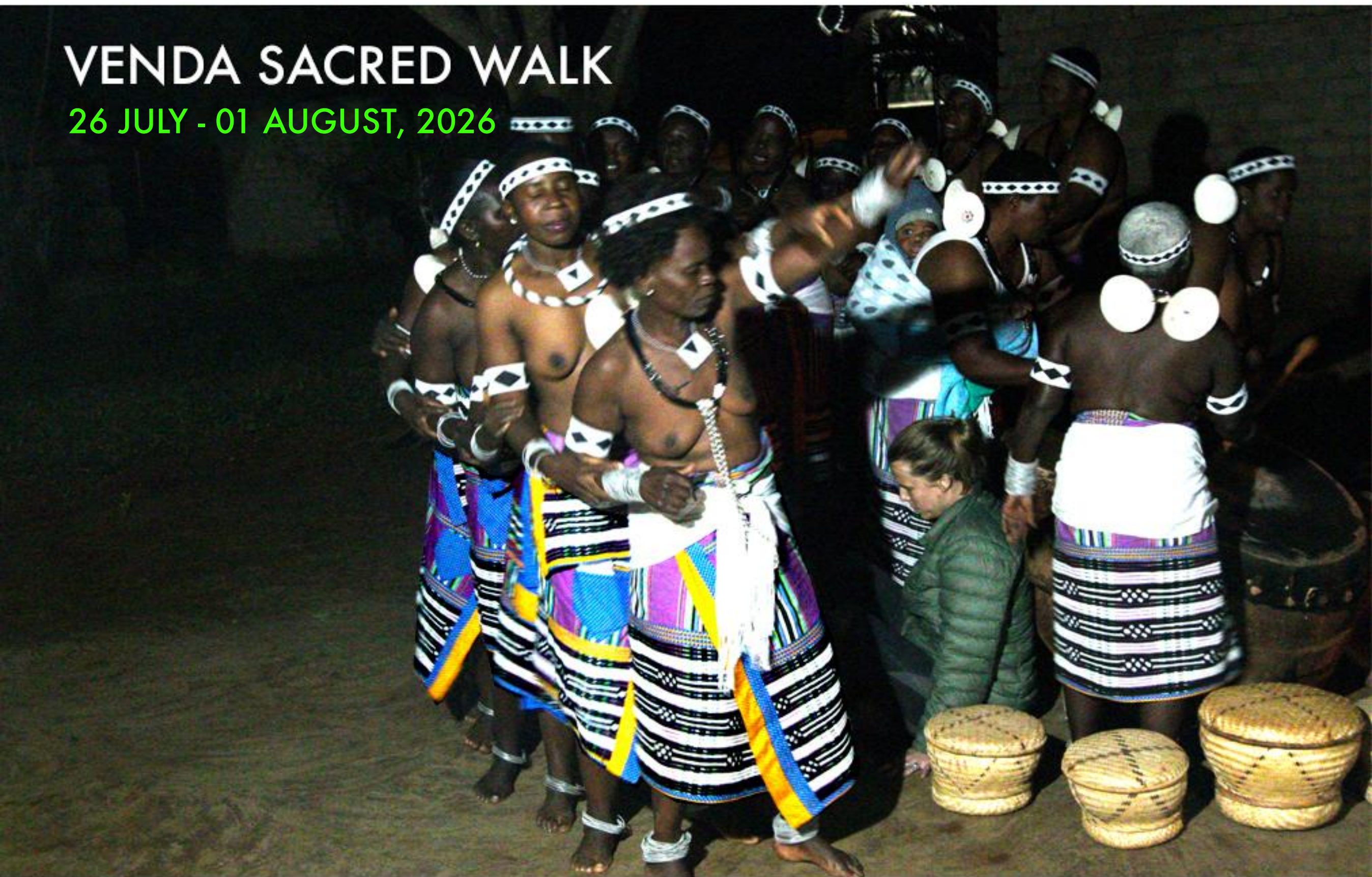


## VENDA SACRED WALK

26 JULY - 01 AUGUST, 2026



The Domba or python dance ....a participant feeling the energy of the big drums coursing through her body.

Photo: Jeffrey Rink

**The Venda Sacred Walk takes us deep into the spiritual heart of Venda in the Soutpansberg Mountains. We stay in villages neighbouring the Sacred Lake — Lake Fundudzi, and the Sacred Forest — the Thathe Vondo Forest.**

First conceived by Ecopsychology Africa in 2001, the Walk ultimately came to fruition as a community project in 2017. Most Venda people in the area live traditionally and have a deep connection to Land and Spirit. As we walk, we move towards a deeper understanding of this profound connection, and through this, how our wellbeing is interlinked with the more-than-human world. This is a deeply immersive experience. It is 'unsanitised' in the sense that we experience traditional life just as it is. The hospitality we experience is a privilege uniquely earned by Ecopsychology Africa through relationships that have been built up over many years.

A synergy occurs here as we benefit from the spiritual richness of the Walk. Local community members benefit materially from our presence. Our 'footprint' is limited. The frequency of Walks per year is limited to minimise our impact socially. We sleep in traditional huts. Eat traditional food from the Earth. Our water comes from springs and is of great quality. No 'special' accommodation is made for us as people visiting this area.

Our guides — both formal and informal — are excellent. From award winning cultural and field guides, to local guides who add a fresh energy, enthusiasm and perspective to the Walk. En-route we encounter earthy music, traditional healers, story tellers redolent with the rich mythology of Venda. Formal meditation furthers the trance experience of this enchanting, entrancing world, altering consciousness naturally, step by ensuing step. This indeed is a 'trance-formative' journey. The traditional guardians of the sacred sites we visit expressly welcome us and the ethos Ecopsychology Africa brings to Venda.

Venda is a rural area in the Limpopo Province in the heart of the Soutpansberg Mountains where people still live traditionally. It is mountainous, subtropical and remote. Scenery is spectacular. Small villages nestle in the valleys of this verdant region. It is home to the Venda people, who have retained their unique cultural and linguistic heritage. Fishermen provide for the community from the lake's resources, and people and cattle somehow are immune from the predations of the crocodiles in the lake - we still don't understand how this uneasy truce works, but it does...! Crocodiles tolerate the villagers and cattle; villagers tolerate the crocodiles. Waterfowl are abundant. Fish eagles soar and call and majestic crowned eagles - apex predators, frequent the vicinity. We are also close here to the pristine source of the Mutale River, which feeds the Lake, passing through as it flows on to the Kruger Park and its confluence with the Luvuvhu River, near where it merges with the Limpopo River.

Fishermen on the shores of Lake Fundudzi.



Venda woman packing 'home-grown' tobacco outside her hut.



In Jeffrey's words, "I have probably, at a guess, visited this region about 20-30 times over the years - I don't keep count. The topography of the area, and its rich spirituality, culture, and musical heritage inspired me to create the Venda sacred walk along the lines of the Camino de Santiago in Spain.

This unique walk focuses on Venda's rich spiritual legacy - a legacy that lives on here in the daily lives of the people and places we will encounter". As an ecotourism project planned with the community, the Venda Sacred Walk has given rise to local community projects that provide direct work and income for local people.

We overnight in their huts, eat local food, and experience extraordinary music- music that is unique to Venda. Our evenings will be combined with storytelling as told by the elders of the villages in which we meet. Senior guide Nelson Maphaha won the Lilizela award as South Africa's top cultural guide. He has a deep knowledge of Venda culture and tradition. Jeffrey has known and worked with Nelson for over 2 decades.

Our luggage will be transported from village to village. We walk with a day-pack. Lake Fundudzi today is still treated as a sacred place, together with other sacred heritage sites in the areas that we traverse.

Mystical Lake Fundudzi.



Village women cooking.



The Tshirovho River above Tshatshingo Potholes.

The villages nearby and their attendant headmen are the guardians of the Lake. The Lake is steeped in mythology and legend. These will unfold during our pilgrimage there. These sacred places are intertwined with traditions and rituals. Nearby is another sacred site; the Thate Vondo Forest, sacred to the Tshidzhive clan. The Venda royal family are buried here, and it is forbidden to enter this forest beyond a central pathway. An indigenous Afromontane forest, it is rich in mythology, and has sacred, unique rituals practiced there to this day. Included in the walk to the Lake is a visit to the spectacular geological phenomenon known as the Tshatshingo Potholes which are fed by the Tshirovho River, with deep pools that we will be able to swim in. Behind the potholes is a 'secret valley' - quite primordial - a 'lost world,' that 'outsiders' are not aware of.

## Wednesday 29 July:

We are transported to and then walk to the Thate (Sacred) Forest. We learn about the forest and its significance. Then we walk on to Tshitangani, the chief here being a co-guardian of Lake Fundudzi with the Chief of Tshiheni. We stay in the most beautiful traditional huts here, with our affable hosts. A village elder tells us stories of Lake Fundudzi that night.

## Thursday 30 July:

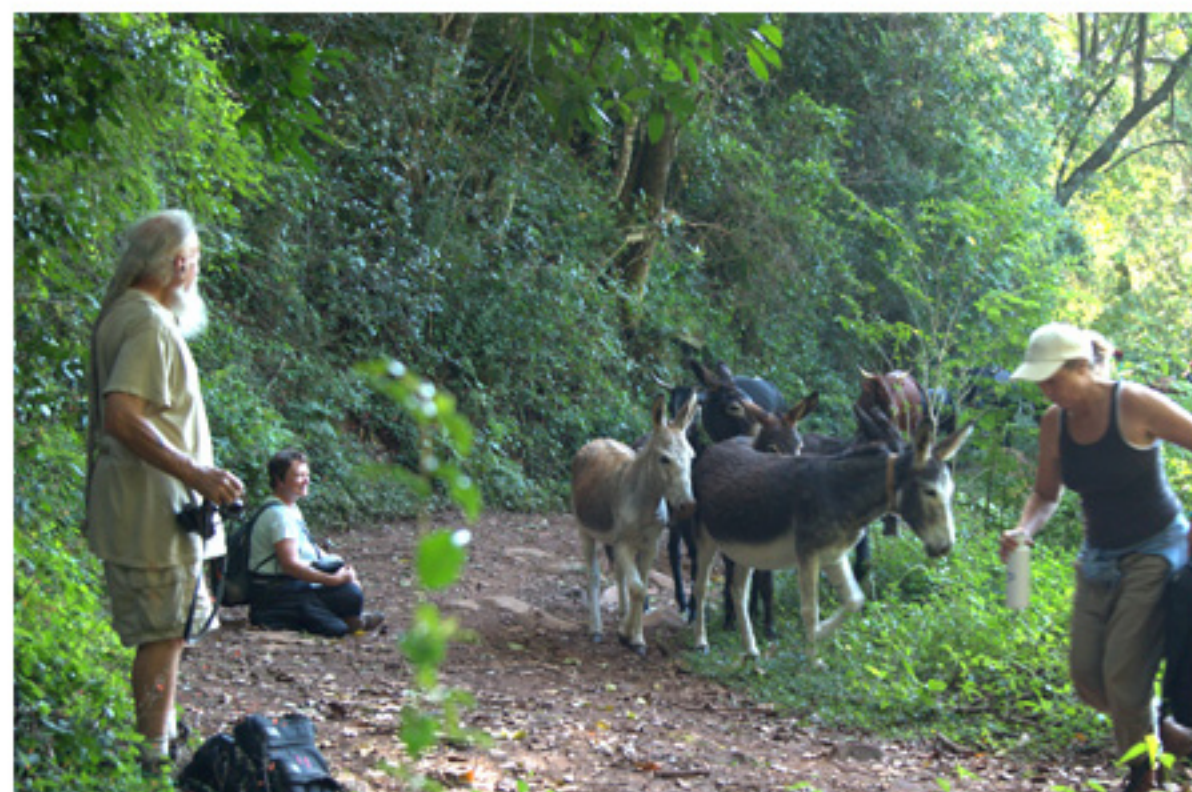
With our guides, present as always, we visit sacred Lake Fundudzi. Always a privileged adventure. We meditate here — awesome! Circumstances permitting, we will swim in the Mutale River (close to its source from a spring) at its confluence with Lake Fundudzi. We then continue our walk to our next village- Tshiheni. Both these villages have views of the Lake and are closely connected to it as the guardians of the lake.

## Friday 31 July:

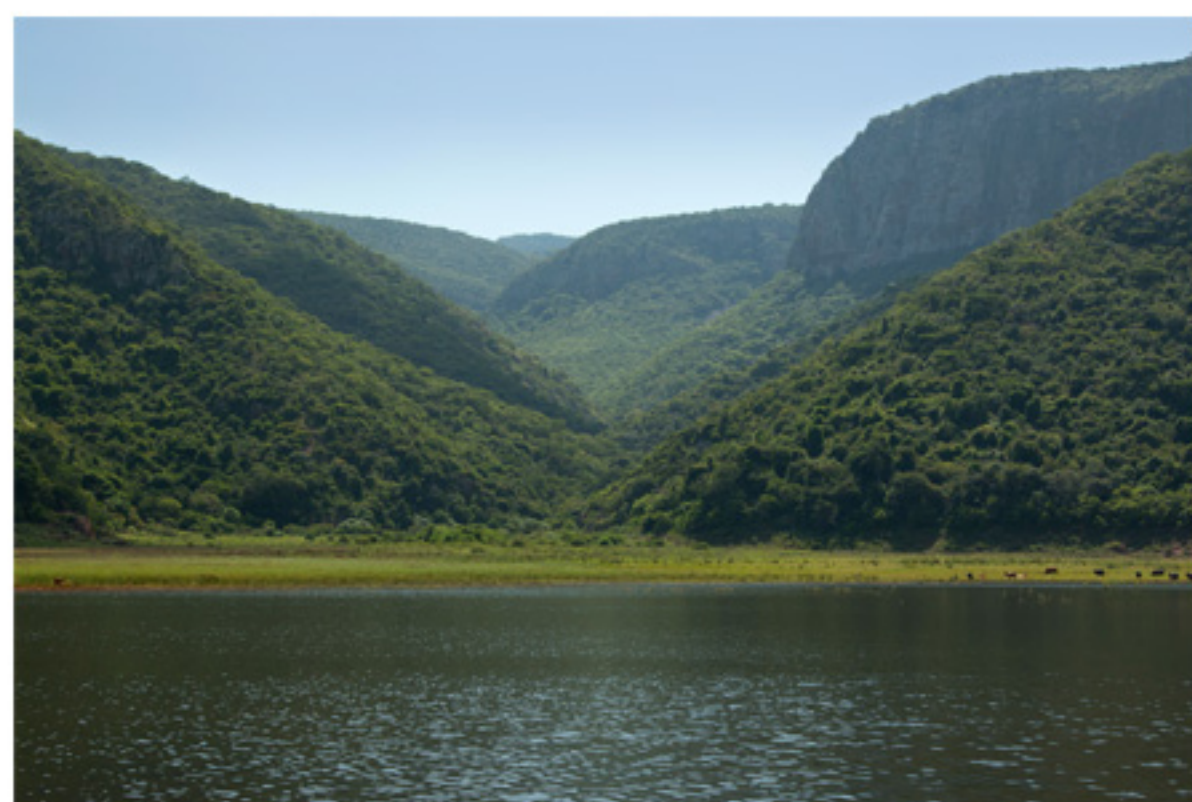
Our transport fetches us and returns us to Mukambani for our last night in Venda. Mukambani too has excellent musicians and we will experience other forms of Venda music here, including Marombo music - Venda spiritual music, awesome singing, trance inducing drumming and percussion, which is hauntingly evocative! Our night here will be in relative 'comfort.

## Saturday 01 August:

9h00 Depart for Johannesburg.



Donkeys in our path.



Lush valley flowing into Lake Fundudzi.



Venda music.

## Sunday 26 July:

Meet JHB (ORTIA) Airport. Travel to Mukambani - about 8 hours. This village is high up in the Soutpansberg Mountains. Our campsite is close to King Kennedy Tshivase's royal homestead. We will overnight with local families in the village of Mukumbani. Catering is provided by a community project initiated in 2003 by Ecopsychology Africa.

## Monday 27 July:

Walk to the village of Makwarani, where we stay overnight - about 10km. That night we experience traditional Venda music and dancing.

## Tuesday 28 July:

We walk to the village of Tshidzivhe where we spend the night. En route we spend several hours at the Tshatshingo Potholes where we explore this extraordinary natural phenomenon. Chief Netshidzivhe (a senior Venda chief), is our host in Tshidzivhe. He is the guardian of the Thate Vondo Sacred Forest. We will experience Tshikhona music here - a musical form hauntingly entrancing and joyous, unique to Venda.



Huts overlooking Lake Fundudzi.



Power of the big Venda drums. Awesome!

Smoke rising from a traditional hut in the rain.



We will be accommodated in five villages en-route to and around Lake Fundudzi. Water will be provided for facecloth bathing in basins. It is suggested that you bring a supply of 'wet wipes.' Toilets will be 'long -drops.' The long drops are all clean and hygienic. You will need your own sleeping bag and pillow, and a sleeping mat is essential-ground floors are hard! Bags will be transported from village to village. There will be streams and rivers along the way we can swim and bathe in! All food will be provided including a lunch snack while we walk. Pack your own 'snack-pack' for the daily hikes. A natural fountain supplies water to each village! The water in each village is tried and tested, and is excellent. Bring enough water bottles. We suggest carrying around 2 liters with you on the walk.



Drinking water from a healing spring.

**LOCAL GUIDES:** We will be joined by local guides. We walk with outstanding guides from the area who understand the depth and breadth of Venda culture, the history of the land and the transformations to the place and its people that have occurred over the years. These guides provide an understanding of the cultural, medicinal and scientific importance of the environment we traverse. Storytelling by elders transports us back into local mythology and deep oral history. Nelson Maphaha has been awarded a "Living Legend" award by Limpopo Province.



Swimming in beautiful pool in the Mutale River near source.



Nelson Maphaha- award winning cultural guide.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This is the 'planned' itinerary. A tour transfer company will transfer us to and from Venda. We are often going to be off-road in remote areas. Weather - good or bad can impact on our arrangements, as can local 'social' circumstances. In Venda itself, given the remoteness of the area, use will be made of local transport where necessary.

**ETHOS:** This trip is about experiencing Venda life as it is. There is no 'intervention' at all re preparations. We will eat and sleep the way the local people do. It is deeply immersive and 'unsanitised.' Specific dietary needs will however be catered for. This walk is not about comfort. There is no luxury. It is about authenticity and experience! This is the "New Luxury."



Mutale River entering Lake Fundudzi.

**MEDITATION:** Meditation will be taught to the group and we will practice meditation in places both special and sacred. Participation is voluntary!

**COST:** For details on place availability, deposit booking fee and total cost of the Venda Sacred Walk, please email or call me on +27 83 632 3039.

**ALL FLIGHTS, INSURANCE ( Personal / Medical ) AND TIPS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE COST:**

Please book your return flight for after 19h00 on Saturday 01 August, 2026.

**QUESTIONS?** Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any queries. Email: [shrink@tiscali.co.za](mailto:shrink@tiscali.co.za)  
To find out more about Ecopsychology Africa please visit our website: [www.ecopsychologyafrica.com](http://www.ecopsychologyafrica.com)  
or join in the conversation on our Facebook page at: [facebook.com/ecopsychologyafrica](https://facebook.com/ecopsychologyafrica)



Venda music, delicious avocado's and story telling around the fire.

**JEFFREY RINK** is the Founder of Ecopsychology Africa and has been facilitating Ecopsychology experiences since 1998.

Jeffery combines his profession as a Clinical Psychologist with his passion for ecopsychology, traditional cultures and meditation in Ecopsychology Africa Retreats by syntheizing psychological and ecological principles.

Jeffrey is a senior member of the International Ecopsychology Society.



## Venda Retreat Facilitators

**Dr. Liz Kruger** is an environmental anthropologist whose personal and professional endeavours centre on a fascination with human-nature connection. The natural world has since childhood been a great teacher of hers and continues to show her how important our connection with the non-human world is to our health and well-being. This ongoing quest for healing and connection with self and the land has led her on deep pilgrimages over a year long up the length of Amazon River, across the Atacama Desert to the crest of the Andes and the shores of Lake Titicaca, and the forests of South Africa. Liz has participated in previous Ecopsychology Africa retreats and is mentored by Jeffrey Rink of Ecopsychology Africa.



**Nicola Lazenby** (M.A. Modernity and Literature), and is a Registered South African Counsellor (Psychology Honours). Her 4 month long 1000km journey on foot through the wilderness of the Pacific Crest Trail evoked a special interest in ecotherapy, and how our connection with nature shapes our wholeness and healing. She has been training and guiding peer support groups with Women for Afrika since 2016. She is in private practice under the supervision of Jeffrey Rink (Clin. Psych), founder of Ecopsychology Africa, who also mentors her work in the wilderness.

