

French Retreat

Yoga teacher Heather George takes OM magazine on a journey through one of her Create Space retreats in France



What is it about the Mill Retreat Centre? You arrive and within minutes feel like you have been on holiday for a week. It has an ability to make you relax. My partner Tony, Kevan and I went over on Wednesday as usual so we could get everything set up before everybody else arrived.

The guests started to arrive mid-afternoon on Thursday. After their journey, some sat and meditated beside the river, others explored the beauty of the Mill and its 30 acre grounds.

Thursday evening is a gentle transition from daily life to life on the retreat. First, Tony and I gave an introduction about the centre and our schedule, followed by a gentle yoga class. I asked our guests to think about what they wanted to get out of the retreat and checked over the next few days to make sure they were getting it.

The yoga room is at the top of the mill facing north east with skylights on both sides. Hence, in the morning, it gets the sun from one side, and in the evening, the other. We concluded our class chanting "Aham Prema" which means "I am divine love" 108

times. There are said to be 72,000 nadis (energy channels) in the body and 108 main ones. So the chant clears them all.

After breakfast I run a stronger yoga class whilst Tony took the others on a gentle local walk. Then it was back for a workshop on meditation. I described seven different types of meditation (empty mind; breath watching; meditation on an object (yantra); mindfulness meditation; transcendental meditation; and meditation on loving kindness and walking meditation), leading the group through examples of all of them.

Saturday was the usual early morning meditation, yoga, breakfast and then for more yoga followed by a walk which took in a disused railway line through some local beech woods. It was glorious with the birds singing, sun shining through a bright green canopy, the occasional glimpses of deer, wild boar and some beautiful wild flowers.

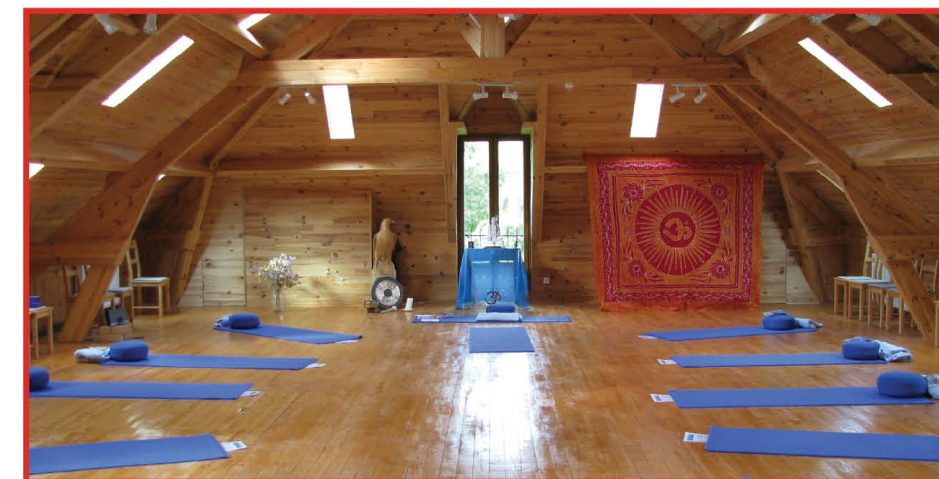
In the afternoon Tony led a walking meditation around the lake. As we were so relaxed, the local wildlife all came out to see us: the mallards, coots, great crested grebe, swans, white egret

and otters. After more yoga and dinner we had a surprise treat. Two of our group, David and Marion Thomas gave us a fabulous workshop. Back home in Surrey they run a club for traditional Argentinian Tango (Tango Journey). David told us that the essence of Tango is 'The Embrace' between two people with two heads, four legs but one heart. David's presentation explored the parallels between Tango and meditation. Both are based on developing deep awareness at a physical, emotional and spiritual level. David and Marion then did a short demonstration before we all had a go – a wonderful evening.



Sunday morning always starts with meditation and yoga a little later. After breakfast I ran a workshop on 'The Rainbow Bridge – a Journey through the Chakras'. I gave a brief outline of the chakra system, its history, how it relates to the mind, nervous and endocrine systems and physical bodies, its associates and role of each chakra. I then led the group through a visualisation and meditation addressing each chakra in turn.

Sadly it was soon time to pack, have lunch, and say our goodbyes amid the tears. Of course the weather waited until we were heading home before turning for the worse. It is always kind to us.



Heather George is a yoga teacher, Pilates teacher and life coach based in Staines (omtropy.com). She will be teaching at the Yoga Show in October 2011 (theyogashow.co.uk) and at the International Yoga Festival in Sharm El Sheikh in November 2011.



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**For more information and to
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