

The Soft Road

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RETREAT TO ADVANCE

The Soft Road develops and leads Retreats as part of our program and this has led me to consider deeply the nature of *retreat*.

These contemplations draw on my direct experience of going on Retreat – at least once a year – over fifteen years, five continents, a diverse range of environments, Retreat leaders, and topics.

Answering the Call – To Escape or Advance?

If called to Retreat, take a moment to explore what is calling you, and what you are seeking.

Retreat – the very word draws us in. For almost everyone there's something seductive in the idea of getting away; the prospect of escaping the daily routine and all its responsibilities, and maybe even hiding away, from the world.

It's a measure of 21st century living that retreat-based vacation is one of the fastest growing sectors of the travel industry. The term is often borrowed to package the idea of "retreat" as escape or getaway. And while the intentions of the provider may be good, this inescapable truth will meet us there: there's no hiding from ourselves. ***Wherever you go, there you'll be.***

Let's not judge, or make wrong, this desire to escape. Rather, we learn it's possible to go towards ourselves, not away, whilst also enjoying a different form of retreat.

The original meaning in the call to Retreat has been integral to personal transformation for millennia. This choice to remove from familiar surroundings and detach from distraction is even more relevant now — an increasingly rare opportunity to regroup, recalibrate, and establish deeper foundations from which to progress.

Retreat in this context is not a capitulation or an escape. It's a conscious and strategic choice to deepen knowledge of the Self and learn how to apply this knowledge for an elevated experience of life.

Early references to the age-old purposes of Retreat are in the realm of spiritual devotion and relationship to God; participants seeking to know God, to see and hear more clearly the presence of God.

And whilst this is rarely the aim for a retreat in the 21st century model of world travel and personal discovery, an element of higher purpose is a defining feature in the transformative potential of taking time on Retreat.

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We seek to know ourselves, to look inside and go deeper within — to open our hearts and to hear more clearly the inner voice, to recognise intuitive guidance and develop self-trust.

What to Expect – The True Nature of Retreat

Retreat in this tradition supports us to simplify, to empty out and take stock, so that we may go deeper. We go beneath the white noise and cease the constant motion – both physical and mental – of daily life, in a setting offering peace and quietude. There is a structure and purpose to the days, decided for us, no thinking or organising required!

Yet being on Retreat is not a passive experience. It requires active participation and some work on our own behalf. And whilst it's not always comfortable, profound breakthroughs can come when we place our attention inside and take the opportunity to look within.

Reflecting on my own experiences, the considered choice to go away and invest in me – to pursue my personal and spiritual development away from my everyday world – was both a gift to myself, and more, a transformative contribution to the woman, the teacher, I am today.

We don't – nor did I – do this on our own. Nurture and support are vital elements to the Retreat experience, as are love and non-judgment, and the wisdom and direction of a masterful teacher.

When all these elements come together, the true nature of Retreat is an opportunity, like no other, to be enriched and equipped with new tools and insights, to advance our lives – towards greater happiness.

Melanie Kirkbride is an exceptional coach and master teacher of Vedic meditation who works with people to empower them to unlock their potential and thrive. [Email us](#) to enquire about Melanie's services, and to receive her Teachings.