

In the Quiet

TAPPING THE STEERING WHEEL on my way to Halfmoon Bay from Roberts Creek, my inside voice is busy chattering, mentally calculating the tasks of the week, while simultaneously wondering what on earth I will sing during lunch at the Self Realization Meditation Healing Centre (SRMHC).

Turns out I have misunderstood a key component of my destination and the Centre's mandate: peace and quiet.

On the telephone earlier in the week, Antony Fentiman, a leader at the local Centre, and originally from the U.K. had said we would all be eating lunch, "In the quiet."

But in my haste, I thought I heard him say, "In the choir." And so I've brought throat lozenges and a song list, just in case I'm asked to belt out a few tunes between the main course and dessert.

In fact, communal meals are taken in total silence at the Centre at lunchtimes and on silent retreats. Only the noise of my stomach gurgling and joyful birdsong can be heard during a delicious and lovingly prepared lunch. But more on that later.

**STORY AND
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First, like any new guest arriving at the main house, I'm greeted by Noelle Hanuse, Kathryn Fentiman (nee Travers) and Antony who collectively run and live at the centre. They offer a brief explanation, orientation and a tour.

I'm booked in just for the day, a mini-getaway of sorts which will include an intro meditation class, lunch and free time in the lush garden and grounds. Upon entering the softly lit surroundings, I'm at ease. ▶





“When people come here we say, ‘get yourself comfortable and feel that this is your home,’” says Kathryn, of the cozy lounge-like reception room which is lined on one side with books and study materials, along with photos of the Centre’s founder, Mata Yoga-nanda Mahasaya Dharma.

“And we know that our guests are relaxed when we find them on the couch with their feet up,” adds Hanuse, with a smile.

The not-for-profit organization, the Canadian arm of a founding group in the U.K., offers a variety of ways to experience that peaceful feeling. Formally located in Gibsons, the Centre obtained the Halfmoon Bay location in 2003, with the current management in place since 2008. There are workshops and introductions to a variety of practices, from pure meditation, energy care and workplace wellness. You can also visit the Centre for individual, couples or family counselling along with treatments in natural spiritual healing. The group even offers animal healing for your pets.

Guests may also sign up for group or individual retreats, which can run from a few days to several weeks and longer (based upon your interest and needs). There are silent retreats, personal customized getaways and special holiday retreats at Easter and Christmas. Some visitors come to give service, working as a member of the Centre’s small community for days, weeks or months. Other guests simply enjoy the Centre as a quiet and reasonable bed and breakfast facility.

The main house features the lounge, kitchen, dining room, parlour, meditation/yoga studio and healing room. There are cozy accommodations for about seven guests, in separate buildings on the landscaped grounds, which include gardens, paths, forest, open green space and a tranquil pond.

With backgrounds in recreation, teaching and counselling,



Opening page: Kathryn Fentiman practices yoga on the grounds.

Opposite page: There are cozy accommodations on the ground for approximately 10 people.



Above: Meals are simple and delicious and served in silence.

Left: There are three private rooms with various sleeping configurations.

both Kathryn and Hanuse are well known on the Sunshine Coast and teach transformation hatha yoga, at the Centre and in the community. Hanuse also works extensively with Aboriginal communities. Antony, husband of Kathryn, came to Canada in 2008 and is trained to teach the Pure Meditation Foundation classes and workshops. They all work together as a spiritual family to run the Centre and to give service or seva by offering free meditation evenings and other events to the community at large.

“The Centre is very much about empowering people and their way of life, by (helping them) get in touch with their own intuition and wisdom,” says Kathryn, explaining that teachings are based on universal principles of unconditional love and truth.

We move onto the healing room then, which is also peaceful and warm.

“All of us are trained as healers,” explains Hanuse. She and Kathryn are also certified counsellors and yoga teachers. Antony is a developing counsellor.

Healing sessions are customized to suit individual needs but always take place in a holistic way, taking into account the mind, body and spirit along with any contributing patterns, Noelle notes. Breathing, visualization and positive affirmations may also



Kathryn Fentiman, Noelle Hanuse and Antony Fentiman run the Centre.

be a part of the session. Healing works at the level that is right for each individual for that moment in time and people often feel a burst of positive energy and more peace within, notes Noelle.

After the tour, I'm due in the meditation room to meet up with Antony for my intro session to Pure Meditation Foundation. It takes about an hour to run through the mental and physical technique, which involves breathing, posture and concentration, plus practice meditating at the end. While nervous at first, by the finish I am feeling confident that this is something I can actually do! Next, I get to practice with the group for 15 minutes of meditation, a daily pre-lunch ritual (which is optional). The quarter hour of silence slips by, but the quiet doesn't end there.

As promised, lunch time is "in the quiet" too. Meals are freshly prepared, vegetarian and infused with love, notes Kathryn. In the main house dining room, we enjoy a beautiful warm roasted beet salad and a sliced zucchini-herb frittata loaf, with fresh fruit and homemade yogurt for dessert. The hardest part of keeping quiet for me is to resist exclaiming, "this is so delicious!" after every bite. Without the usual distractions of banter or chatter I find I am even more focused on the tastes, flavours and goodness of the meal.

Afterwards, time for a sweet stroll amongst those songbirds and a crowd of hummingbirds flitting around on the 0.8-hectare property. There isn't time for the half hour backwoods trail walk to Trout Lake today, but that option is also available.

The grounds are landscaped and forested, with a new vegetable compound in the works along with a heritage shed being refurbished and a new workshop under construction. Preparations are well underway for the summer open house to be held at the Centre on July 9 from 10am – 5pm. It's free and open to the public with tea and cake to be served throughout the day and healings offered by donation. For info visit: selfrealizationcentre-canada.com. **CL**