



Mindful Nature Walking Retreat

20–22 June 2025



Coming Home to Ourselves

- a mindful nature walking retreat

South Downs National Park, 20-22 June 2025

Thank you for your interest in RUN-ZEN's mindful nature walking retreat. This information pack should answer most of your questions but do please contact Stuart at runzen.contact@gmail.com if you need any further information.



The retreat programme

Start and finish times

20 – 22 June 2025 *(NB - the following timing may be subject to modest revision)*
You are invited to arrive from 5.30pm on Friday 20 June. There will be an evening meal at 7.00pm and the retreat will start at 8.00pm. The programme will finish by 2.00pm on Sunday 22 June including lunch.

Each full day will begin at 7.30am with the final guided activity closing around 8.30pm. There is a sample schedule on page 7 and our programme will include:

- ❖ Mindful nature walking
- ❖ Tai chi and qigong – easy-to-learn mindful movement.
- ❖ Meditation – guided silent practices to help calm and focus the mind.
- ❖ Free time to explore your surroundings or simply relax and reset.

Through this combination of practices, we will investigate together the value of developing skills in cultivating awareness, embodiment and relaxation. We will explore how to apply these principles both to help us walk in nature with more focus and enjoyment, but also how they can support our wellbeing in daily life.



The view back towards the YHA South Downs hostel and River Ouse

Coming Home to Ourselves: an introduction

Join us for a special weekend walking the trails of the South Downs National Park. Our daily guided walks will explore the rolling terrain and wide-open views across the Sussex Downs, including walking sections of the South Downs Way National Trail. This will be complemented by a mindfulness-based programme of gentle tai chi and meditation. There will also be free time to relax and enjoy the beautiful landscape.

Is this retreat right for me?

We all need to step away from the stresses and strains of everyday life from time to time and take the opportunity to *come home to ourselves*. If you're looking to immerse yourself in inspiring natural surroundings in good company, while finding the right balance of activity and relaxation, then this retreat will be perfect for you.

RUN-ZEN's unique offer is to incorporate mindfulness into activities such as walking and running in nature. In simple terms this is about learning and investigating the value of bringing awareness to the activity at hand, and this retreat will support you to explore and apply a range of mindfulness skills.

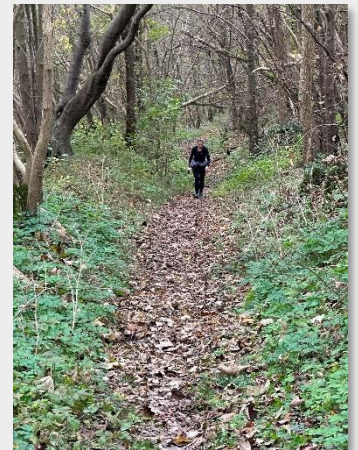
Mindful walking in nature

When we walk with mindfulness, we are invited to pay close attention in the present moment, and in this way both our inner experience and surroundings can come to life. This is the approach to walking we will take as we explore the open space of the Sussex Downs including key landmarks such as Beddingham Hill and Furle Beacon.

Our longest walk will be up to 7.5 miles (12.5km) and is likely to take around three and a half hours to complete including stops to rest and relax.

The walks will be led at an easy-to-moderate pace. The terrain for this retreat is hilly with both climbing and descents, so you should be confident walking in this type of landscape and have a suitable level of fitness. We strongly recommend that you bring appropriate footwear such as walking boots or trail running shoes for walking long distances on grass and rough path surfaces. Each walk will of course have a guide at the front but also a back marker so that we ensure the group remains together.

We don't want anyone to be anxious about the ability of the group and whether they can keep up on the walks, so please get in touch before booking if you require any more clarity about what to expect.



Tai chi movements & mindfulness meditation

While the central activity of our Coming Home to Ourselves retreat will be mindful nature walks, we will be incorporating a complementary programme of activities to more broadly support your health, wellbeing and fitness.

Tai Chi Movements for Wellbeing (TMW) is a simple sequence of movements drawn from both the tai chi and qigong traditions which is particularly effective in helping us to be fully present in our bodies.

Alongside our activities in movement will be sitting meditation practice. The whole programme is designed to support you to build your 'muscle of mindfulness' – growing the capacity to bring more clarity and awareness to your moment-to-moment experience.

No previous experience of tai chi or mindfulness is necessary.



The retreat leaders

Stuart McLeod & Cesare Saguato

Between them Stuart and Cesare will be guiding you through the retreat's programme of mindful nature walking, tai chi movements and other mindfulness-based practices.

Stuart

Stuart has had a love of exploring the outdoors from an early age whether walking, running or cycling.

He has participated in a variety of mindfulness programmes and is a Trained Teacher in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) with Bangor University's Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice. He has been practicing meditation in the Chinese Zen tradition for over 25 years, teaching meditation and leading day retreats with the Western Chan Fellowship.

He is a teacher of Tai Chi Movements for Wellbeing (TMW) and a qualified Qigong Instructor with Long White Cloud Qigong.

A key focus of Stuart's personal practice centres upon the application of mindfulness techniques and skills as a means to help us re-inhabit our bodies.



Cesare

Cesare has been exploring health and fitness, including resistance training, running and hiking from his early teens onwards.

He has attended numerous mindfulness programmes and is a Trained Teacher in Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) with Oxford University, and Mindfulness Based Compassionate Living (MBCL) with the Mindfulness Network. He is also a qualified Psychotherapist and Clinical Supervisor.

Cesare has been practising meditation in the Tibetan Buddhist traditions for close to two decades, teaching meditation and leading day retreats with Bodhicharya.

Cesare recognises the importance of skilfully integrating the mind and body for a greater sense of wholeness in experience, embodied presence and well-being in life. Mindful walking in nature provides the perfect opportunity for this to naturally unfold and he is passionate about exploring and sharing this with others.



Saturday's schedule

This may be subject to change, but the Saturday will look something like this.

07:30 Wake up

08:00 Morning mindfulness practice

08:45 Breakfast

09:45 Exploring the day's theme
- mindfulness practice

10:45 Pause and reflect

11:30 Tai Chi Movements for Wellbeing

12:30 Lunch

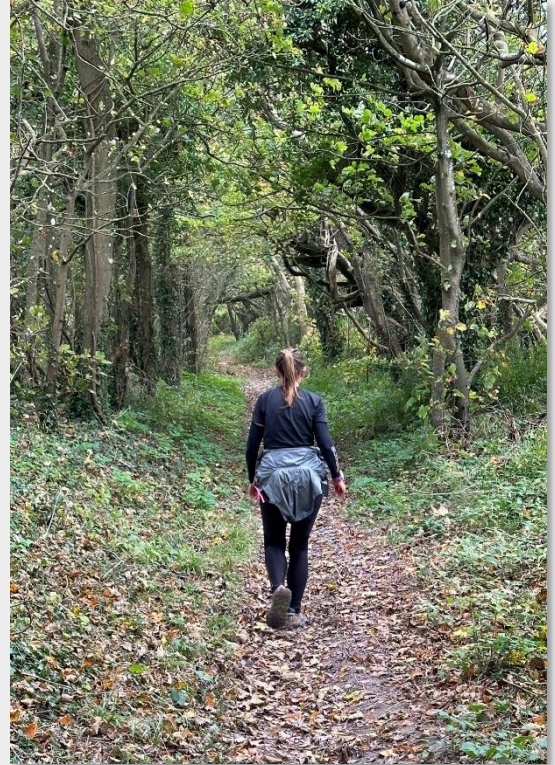
13:30 Mindfulness-based nature walk

17:30 Rest and reflection

18:30 Evening meal

19:45 Mindful meditation and reflection

20:30 Close / free time



YHA Festival of Walking, mindful nature walk led by RUN-ZEN

The accommodation

YHA South Downs

The retreat will be based at YHA South Downs hostel at Itford Farm. The farmhouses and outbuildings can be dated all the way back to the 1300's. Previous farms have been known to be on the same grounds for over 1000 years.

The buildings have been converted into modern and stylish accommodation in a prime spot along the South Downs Way. The unique design and layout of the buildings give this hostel a distinctive look and feel. The nearest towns are Lewes and Newhaven, both less than a 10-minute drive away.



Indoor practice space

We will be using the space pictured below for some of our guided meditation and tai chi practices.



There are various accommodation options.

Single room (£330) (sold out – waiting list)

We have a very limited number of rooms which can be secured as a single so early booking is advised.

Twin room (£600)

For two people who would like the comfort of their own room, we also have a limited number of rooms available as twins. They have two single beds. The price is the total for two people.

Twin camping cabin (£625) (sold out – waiting list)

For two people who would like the comfort of their own space, there are two camping cabins available. Each cabin has two single beds. The price is the total for two people.

Bed in shared dormitory (£260)

A bed space will be allocated in either a male or female dormitory, sharing with a maximum of five other people.

Exclusive use of a five or six-bed dormitory

If you would like to attend as a whole group of four to six with exclusive use of your own dormitory, please email runzen.contact@gmail.com to discuss your needs. If we have a whole dormitory free we can agree a price with you at a discounted rate.



Smaller dormitories for use as single and double rooms



Larger shared dormitories



Camping cabins

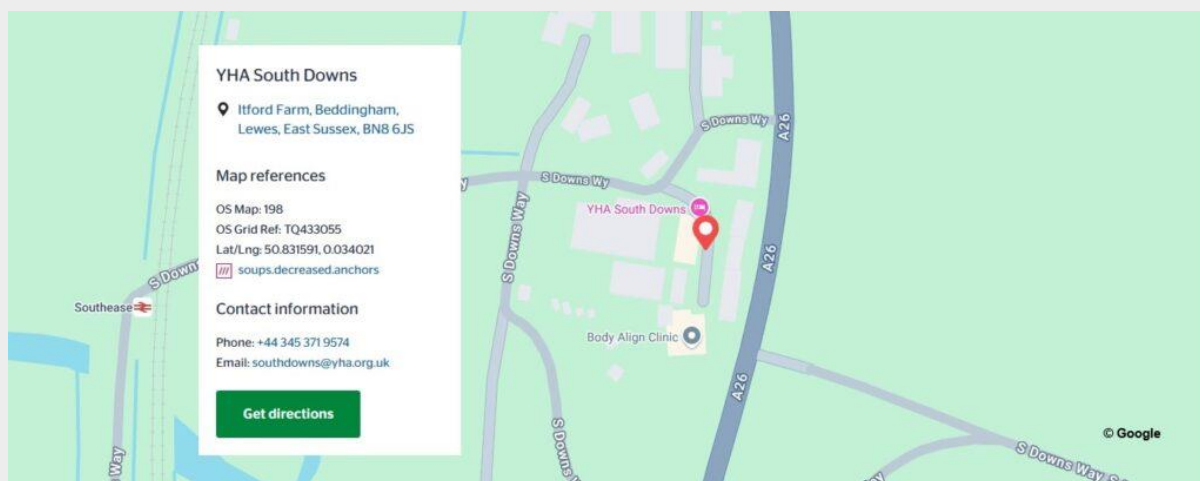
Travelling to YHA South Downs

Address: Itford Farm, Beddingham, Lewes, BN8 6JS

The hostel is located just off the A26 near Southease and only a three-minute walk from Southease station.

Further details for travelling to YHA South Downs can be found here:

<https://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/yha-south-downs/directions>



Catering

Food will be full board with three meals per day. YHA can cater for special dietary requirements if requested prior to the start of the event. Please let us know beforehand.

Retreat costs

The full retreat fee includes accommodation, food and all tuition. It does not include costs of transportation/transfer to the retreat venue.

There is a choice of three types of accommodation.

- Single room – £330 **(sold out – waiting list)**
- Shared twin room – £600
- Shared twin camping cabin – £625 **(sold out – waiting list)**
- Bed in shared dormitory – £260

If you would like to be added to the waiting list for either a single room or shared twin camping cabin, please let us know.

We can potentially accommodate whole groups of 5 or more at a discounted rate, so please contact us if that would be of interest.

Bookings can be made through the RUN-ZEN website [here](#).

You have the option of paying the full fee or a 30% deposit and then the remaining balance which is due 60 days before the start of the retreat. We are also happy to accept payment by bank transfer, so please let us know if that is your preferred method of payment.

Before booking, we recommend that you familiarise yourself with our [Retreat booking terms and conditions](#).

Getting in touch

We are very happy to answer your questions at any time.

Please e-mail Stuart at runzen.contact@gmail.com