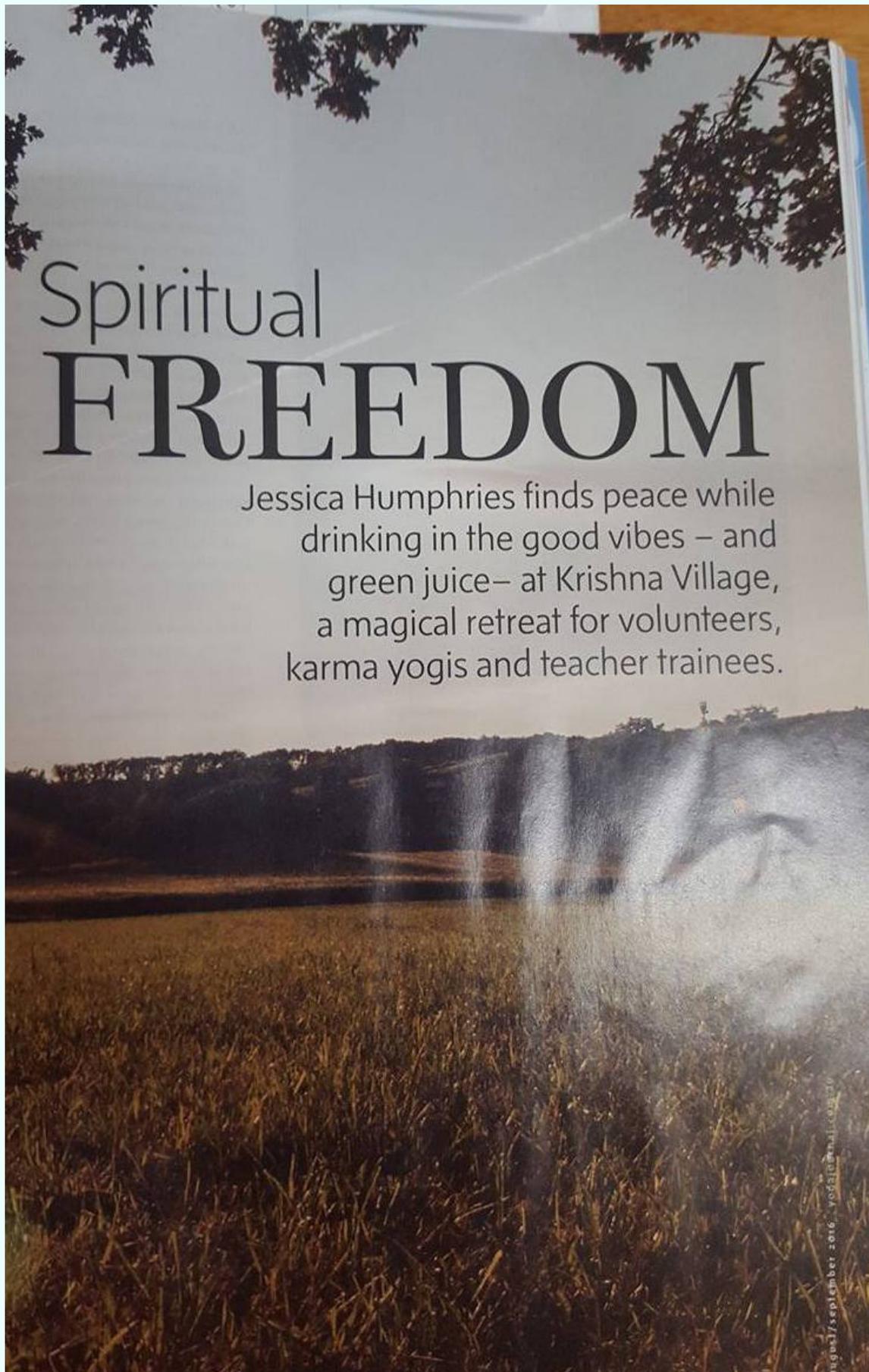


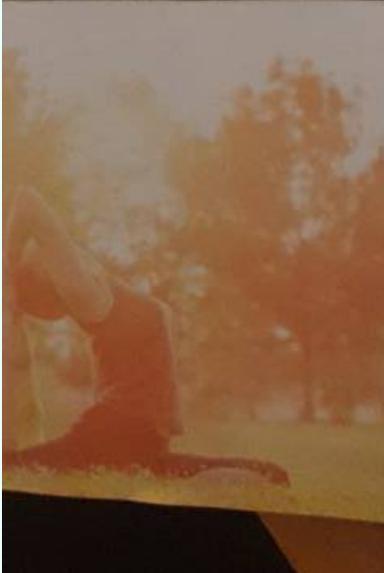
July 2016

Editorial



Spiritual FREEDOM

Jessica Humphries finds peace while drinking in the good vibes – and green juice – at Krishna Village, a magical retreat for volunteers, karma yogis and teacher trainees.



AS A SENSITIVE YOGINI, I tend not to create the kind of lifestyle that leaves room for a lot of stress. I'm a slow living free spirit who makes sure I have plenty of time for the people and activities that I love. But before arriving at Krishna Village, I was feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders. I had just over 24 hours for a quick getaway, and Krishna Village had serendipitously found its way into my arena. My good friend and old colleague Lila Kirtana invited me to come and experience the magic of this little community tucked away in the Tweed Valley, just outside the sleepy town of Murwillumbah in northern NSW. Here, at the eco yoga community, Lila manages teacher trainings and coordinates new arrivals.

As I drove towards the township, I admired the landscape. Typically for this part of the country, the land is surrounded by lush rolling hills, mountains and rainforest. I was instantly struck by a strong sense of community as I drove into the village. I felt as though I had time travelled back a century as I watched people gathering in small groups to talk, stretch and garden. One man pushed a wheelbarrow and smiled brightly at me as I drove in ... he was obviously blissed out on the simple life as the sun shone magnificently above. The good vibes were palpable, and I felt instantly welcomed into this little community of Bhakti yogis walking the talk as they contributed to the growth of the centre while committing to their own spiritual development.

I gathered with other new guests made up of those enjoying a retreat stay, volunteers and karma yogis. Students of the teacher training were also on site, but had already had their introductions almost six weeks ago at the beginning of their course. Their time here was now coming to an end, and the little yoga family was blossoming.

Lila showed us to the humble and colourful yoga shala and I admired the views outside the large windows: intense greenery, gentle slopes and a hint of Mount Warning beyond the clouds in the distance. As we introduced ourselves, I noticed that the other guests were mostly young Europeans. With dreadlocked hair and hippie attire, they were here to explore something new and delve into the intoxicating world of yogic spirituality.

Lila told us that the Krishna Farm has been here for 39 years. Comprising of almost 1000 acres, the community is a multiple occupancy consisting of not only the Krishna Village, but of a Hare Krishna temple, other retreat centres and a school for local children. The Krishna Village itself, which occupies just a small space, was born five years ago when one resident, Madreya Daniels, manifested a vision to create a structured volunteer program and space for students to explore their spirituality and test the waters of a yogic lifestyle. With the volunteer program well under way, the centre has now introduced a retreat program where guests can come and enjoy some time out in nature while exploring their yoga and spiritual practice. Lila explained that nearby Mount Warning was the highest in the area, and that it has long been recognised by traditional communities for its mysterious healing qualities. The area is known far and

wide as a...
needs. "The longer you spend in this area, the more
you feel the benefits," Lila mused.

Krishna Village is very mindful of who they invite
in, honouring the philosophy that "a community is
nothing more than the sum of its individuals", said
Lila. Based on the concepts of Sattva (living in the
mode of goodness), all guests are asked to honour
ethical principles from yogic philosophies.

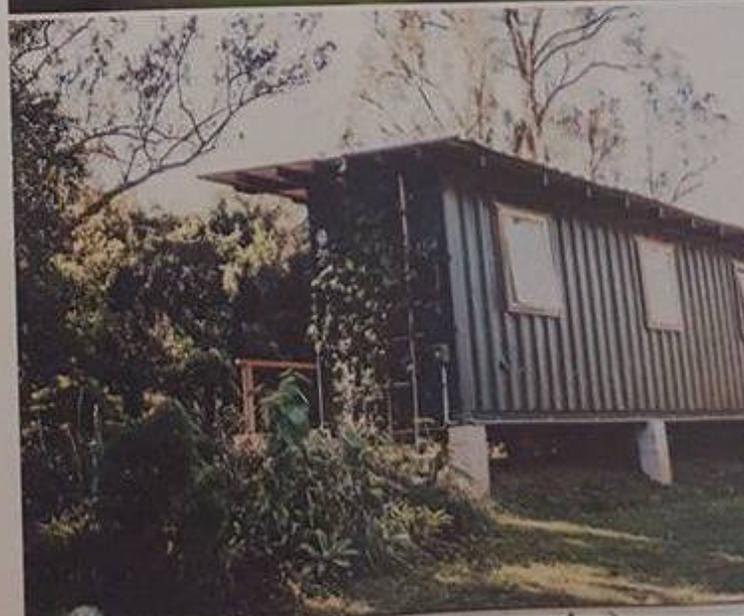
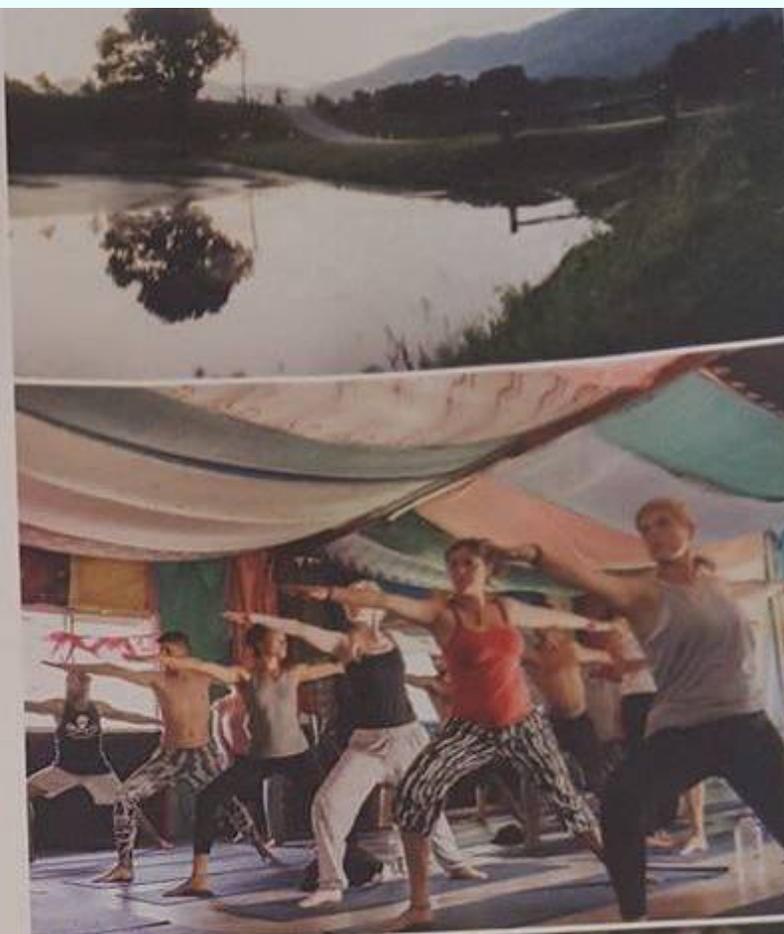
As we wandered through the kitchen and outdoor
dining area, I became aware of the nostalgic scent of a
campfire, and was delighted to see a huge fire pit in
the centre of the dining space. This is where we would
eat our daily lunches, and every Friday night guests
gather around for vegan pizza and music with local
and visiting musicians.

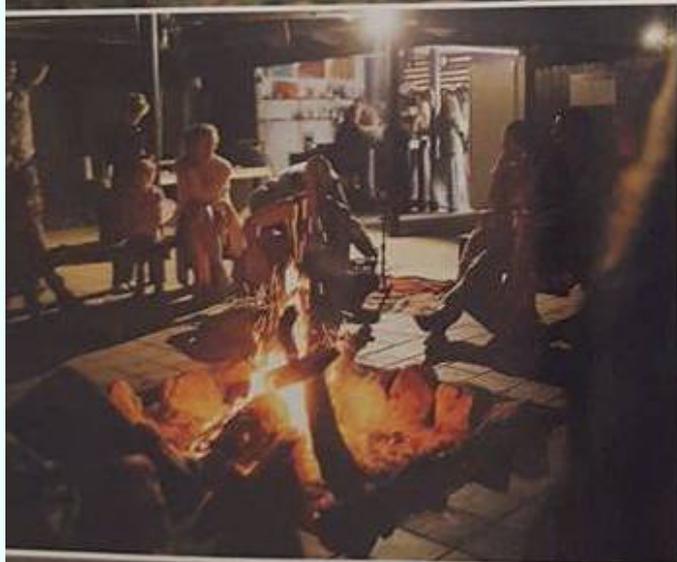
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ways not possible while being
exposed to the toxic stimulation of
the outside world."

The Hare Krishna Temple, although technically not
a part of the Krishna Village, is one of 650 around the
world, and guests are invited to participate in any
sessions on offer – from chanting and meditation, to
talks on the Bhagavad Gita. The very traditional space
is adorned with Krishna deities, and Monks come daily
to lead chanting and philosophy sessions, inspiring
guests with an authentic experience.

After a thoroughly educational tour and some
kirtan (call and response devotional chanting), I was
shown to my room – a small, simple space with a
single bed, dresser and a small oil heater. Out of the
two windows I could see an ocean of green treetops
and some volunteers' tents scattered around. I felt
peaceful, grounded by nature and inspired by the
environment that's been created –the kind of space
that allows one to expand in ways not possible while
being exposed to the toxic stimulation of the outside
world. I stripped off my yoga clothes and threw on
some flowy pants, a woolly jumper and Ugg boots. I
felt like a new yogi again, in unfamiliar but exciting
territory as I sat on my bed and looked out the window.
The sun crept through the trees and I listened to birds
singing and undertones of European accents chatting
in the distance while I sipped on my freshly squeezed
green juice.

At lunch, as I enjoyed my healthy vegetarian meal, I
chatted with Malcolm – one of the senior teachers at
the village and another old friend from the Byron
shire. Malcolm lit up when he talked about his life at
Krishna Village. We chatted yogic philosophy and he
inspired me with his wisdom and enthusiasm.





Although all yogic philosophies are taught on retreats and teacher trainings, the main practices at the village are that of the Bhakti yogis who practice devotion and love through chanting, meditating and service to others. Malcolm said, "It's not about us at all. It's about the teachings. It's amazing the transformation you see of some of these students during the time they're here. They start to ask some really big questions."

Current teacher trainees who have been directed to instruct creatively and holistically, with a focus on safety and alignment, taught the afternoon vinyasa yoga class. After a warming but accessible session, I floated over to dinner – an Indian-style spread served just outside the temple (every Sunday 300-500 members of the community gather here for a Hare Krishna feast). I sat with Lila while I sipped on a sweet chai. She shone as she talked about her love of kirtan and gratitude at being able to share her voice and chanting with students and guests. Lila and Malcom are both part of the well-known kirtan band, EnCHANTed. They both bring their passion for devotional chanting to Krishna Village and facilitate daily kirtans.

As I drifted off to sleep that night, I listened to the pitter-patter of rain on the rooftop and the distant sound of acoustic guitar and singing.

The next day, I drove away feeling centred and peaceful. After a short detox from technology, a good nature hit and a spiritual feast, I imagined the kind of transformation that could occur if I spent a week or a month in this enchanted village ... I was already beginning to daydream of my return.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Far from the glitz and glamour of many modern yoga retreat experiences, Krishna Village is a great value, family-friendly, budget retreat centre. Expect a truly grounded and spiritual experience that's heavy on philosophy and light on asana. The accommodation is simplistic, eco chic, with shipping containers separated into bedrooms. The community aims to act as a midway point – providing an entry to spiritual life for those interested in exploring yogic philosophies.