

Aphrodite Soul Journeys

“Aphrodite Soul Journeys” – the flyer – had caught my attention several times over a three year period, usually, while visiting The Country Cellar – a whole-food shop in Dun Laoghaire. When flyers or ads catch my attention, I feel it’s an invitation, opportunity to do something I need to do, something that would do me good – a sub-conscious calling. I ignored these invitations mostly because I felt I couldn’t manage it – the time, the back up (family) and the finances.

Then last year I had a significant birthday – I was fifty! I got the opportunity to go and I took it. It was booked in April to happen in September. It was lovely to look forward to a holiday on my own doing just what I love – Yoga, eating the kind of food I long for – tasty whole-food vegetarian, cooked by someone else and having optional time to read, meditate, swim and walk – bliss? Most definitely.

12 women from different parts of the country travelled together to the mountains of the Alpujarra Region of southern Spain. We were organised by a gifted leader and facilitator, Lainey Ennis, who worked so hard to look after us, listened to us and provided the best she could for us. The centre miles away from everywhere else – the silence, the air, the view and the isolation is wonderful. The terrain is manageable but no tar macadam or paving and the accommodation is simple but clean and lovely. Our meals were eaten on a small terrace overlooking descending terraces (made by the Moors I think) of olive and almond groves all the way down to the village in the valley.

The food was gorgeous – bought, prepared and cooked for us by Jenny, who travelled up from a nearby village every day. Each day began with Lainey singing our morning timetable to us just before dawn. Her great singing voice travelled in and round the open windows and doors of our chalets. We usually got up and headed straight to the yoga-deck – a large wooden platform, for a two hour gentle yoga routine – one I still use on an almost daily basis. We just threw on a jumper or two over our pyjamas as how you look became less and less relevant and how you feel became more and more important. The routine was easy for some and challenging for others but standing there on your mat greeting the new day with nothing between you and infinity and just about able to make out the shapes of the black mountains was magical. It was like being on the top of the world breathing in this clear air and watching the world change colour in front of you, from black to purple to orange and finally yellow as the sun arose and warmed the parched earth around us. The yoga practice ended with a meditation and was followed by breakfast which you might also have in your pjs if you liked.

Treatments included body massage reflexology and aromatherapy was provided by 2 therapists who travelled up from local villages on a daily basis. We ate, rested; in hammocks or by the pool, walked the olive and almond groves, meditated, read, chatted, relaxed and slept, whatever you wanted in this heavenly environment for a glorious week.

The company was great – 12 women each with their own story of joy and sorrow, fun and sincerity woven together over the week to become a great tapestry of life as we know it. “Aphrodite Soul Journey” was a most wonderful experience for me. It was all I expected it to be and more. And that is why I hope to do it again someday. I admire Lainey’s ability to accommodate and facilitate so well, with her wide experience of people, yoga and life. She gives so much. It’s an unusual kind of holiday, very different, satisfying, and regenerating – lots of food for mind, body and soul.

Charia Cleary March’07