

A Gemmotherapy Immersion Retreat in the Pyrenees

As I entered the gated entrance to La Maison du Cedre, I sensed an unfamiliar apprehension. While I normally embrace new teaching experiences, this would be my first time teaching in France. Questions swirled within me of what and who might lie ahead. Before these seeds of doubt could take their grip I came across a small gathering of women. I soon realized that these were some of the very women who would be forming our retreat community for the next 6 days. The warmth and kindness generated by the open hearts I encountered touched me deeply. At that moment, any anticipatory anxiety about the days ahead melted away, leaving no room left for fear.

Entering the hallway of the wooden shuttered building, I was greeted individually by each woman. However, it didn't take long to spot the one brave male participant who failed at appearing inconspicuous in this all female crowd. Inviting them into our meeting room they each found a place in seats that had been carefully arranged into an intimate circle.

As I gazed into the expectant faces I knew I was exactly where I belonged at that moment in time. It was clear to me that the learning to take place would expand well beyond any lessons I had prepared. While each had signed up for a professional growth opportunity we together would take a journey leading us to deepen both spiritually and emotionally.

It was a year ago last July that Stephane Boistard and I cautiously approached an idea of collaboration. We sat on my sundrenched terrace in Ilhat, just 10 minutes up the road from our current location. The idea was a bold one as we had only just met in person and our approach was vastly different. Yet, there was something there that we both spotted, an opportunity to blend our styles to deliver a unique experience.

As lives will do, each of ours took interesting turns in the months that followed. It was February before we could make a final commitment for a summer retreat. But here we were and the reality of it all set in as introductions began. I soon discovered just who those generous warm souls who greeted me belonged to. To save all of us in this dual language setting was my translator for the week, a Japanese acupuncturist and herbalist from Brittany, joining her was a naturopath from Toulouse, a dietician and herbalist from Belgium, a singer and choral conductor from central France, a psychologist from the Basque region, an energy healer and bud harvester from the southwest coast, a professor of chemical engineering and bud harvester from Lille, a midwife from Brittany and another naturopath and a student of naturopathy from central France. Each of these courageous beings said yes to a deeper dive into the study of Gemmotherapy and to discover a holistic approach to restoring immunity.

I was sure to present materials that would bump up against their belief systems as well as ideas that resonated deeply with their own truth. Their feedback and sharing would do the same for me, giving us all exactly the blend of experiences that would push us to grow.

Each and every day held important lessons for me. I find it so humbling to witness the boundaries of what I believed to be my own limitations crumble. Each and every retreat I lead is just another reminder to step out of the way of Divine order. I may hold the responsibility for setting the agenda, but the way it plays out is precisely what was meant to be. At no time have I seen this so well defined as this week.

When we began to find we were too much in our heads, Stephane was readily available, creating opportunities for us to connect with nature. Whether we spent short breaks with the trees in the garden of La Maison du Cedre, searched for the ancient stone meditation huts in Roquefixade, or waded in the crystal clear pools above the cascades at Montseguer it was

always exactly what was needed. The blending of his unschooled approach, my experiential offerings, and wholesome plant based meals together in the garden produced a harmony we could not have planned.

Now we have bid our farewells, yet the chords we have formed run deep. I am forever grateful for this opportunity and sense that this is not the end but the beginning of something beautiful to come.