

white lotus

yoga teacher/training.

My personal experience at the White Lotus Foundation.



WHITE LOTUS DAY 1.

I arrived a day early into Santa Barbara, CA. I checked in at a hotel late that night.

I was excited for morning and was out the door for an urban hiking adventure. At first I thought I could live in a town like this, however as I explored, I decided it was not for me. It seemed to have been a locally owned, creative town turned into a more modern little city on the beach - cool place to visit. I stopped at the Beach Break Cafe and treated

myself to banana pancakes.



1:00pm rolled around. It was time to check out of the hotel and hitch a ride with the taxi up to the mountains where the White Lotus Yoga Foundation is located - only 20 minutes away from town.

Winding around through the mountains I silently asked permission to enter the land. Upon asking, the taxi driver announced our arrival to the 40 acre foundation.

Overwhelmed. I don't know what to expect. What kind of



My White Lotus Story

I was with my girlfriend, whom I admire, visited me last October in Hawaii and reminded me she strongly felt I was to be a Yoga Instructor.

I couldn't shake the feeling. The next day we went to an internet cafe and I did a Google.com search and the name (*and only name*), WHITE LOTUS stuck out to me. I clicked on their website and was immediately attracted - they went above and beyond the Yoga Alliance's Requirements, their certification logo and their non-dogmatic teaching.

I signed up the very next day.

melissa nelson.



people and how many are attending? What kind of questions will I be asked? Will we be on a Yoga marathon for 16 days? What kind of vegetarian food will we eat?

My gut told me to turn off my cell phone and take off my shoes. More people started showing up. It was intimidating. Our things were gathered in the front room. We began to shake hands, tell stories of

how we heard about White Lotus, where we were from and our little yoga histories.

Finally, we checked in with Beverly, the 11-year White Lotus office choreographer who wasn't shy to hug everyone she checked in.

I'm staying in a quaint little cabin called the "Om Shanty." My roommate is Britney from New York. It's quiet, private and really close to the fire circle, meditation circle, stream and waterfall. We even discovered we have an outside shower!



WHITE LOTUS DAY 2.

This afternoon we went on a hike around the 40 acre property taking a dip into the frigid swimming holes! The Natives of this land called this land the "Gathering Place" and the swimming holes, "Arrival Place". So they say at White Lotus, "you haven't arrived until you've jumped in!" So a few of us did!



WHITE LOTUS DAY 3.

After yesterday I'm starting to really feel connected with some of my classmates. We have a good group of future teachers.

I really like Ganga. His non-dogmatic approach is very attractive and speaks to my heart. I like his personal history of questioning doctrine or scripture and breaking down yoga philosophy.

He seems shy, yet we have been laughing quite a bit during lectures. It's great to see him smile - he seems like a little, excited kid. I wonder what it's like having taught Yoga for this long of period, if he ever gets bored or if it's exciting and new for him every course.

Ganga is a non-traditional yogi incorporating a modern touch. Or as he puts it, scientific and artistic.

Tracey seems balanced having a gentle and an intense personality. Her fluidity with words and her body is exact and yet flowing. I appreciate how she conveys her teaching - never doubting and full of integrity.

I am extremely happy to have Britney as a cabin-mate. We bounce every idea, perception and past experience on each other. I have found a new friend for life.

WHITE LOTUS DAY 4.

Good night's rest. 6th time up the mountain side to the main hall. It's a challenging little hike. What a

way to start the day!

Our days are filled with lectures from Ganga, asana practice and practical lessons from Tracey with gourmet food for 3 meals a day.

The attention to every inch of detail certainly reflects the beauty of the land, the architecture, design and food.

I'm feeling closer to my fellow classmates and am enjoying what I'm learning thus far. Just another piece reminding me I'm exactly where I need to be.

WHITE LOTUS DAY 5.



Last night we had a guest speaker, David Gordon White, author of "The Alchemical Body" and scientist discovering pieces of Tantric Yoga.

After a 40 minute Q&A I was wired and more excited about being here - it took Britney and I awhile to fall asleep.

Instead of a lecture this morning from Ganga we did a "Council Meditation" - Native American based. We each shared a little of each other and passed the talking stick around the room. We joyfully shared tears of growth, love and appreciation of each other and

I've found a deeper connection with Ganga, Tracey and each of my 29 other classmates.



WHITE LOTUS DAY ?

The number of days are blurred with asanas, breathing and lessons. I'm in total absorption of information.

We began with 31, now we are



30 strikingly different individuals whose lives paralleled an existence together in Santa Barbara. Here, we've gathered to become yoga teachers.

Now that I'm here, you may ask: So what is yoga? Is it movement? Is it dogmatic, eastern philosophy? Is it just a popular workout containing mostly of stretches? Is it a dance full of grace and power? Is it a path to enlightenment? Is it a love affair of mystery with what we don't understand?



What is yoga? Perhaps it encumbers the touch of Eastern culture, thus born from myths. Perhaps it is the inquiry of movement and alignment. Maybe it is scientific and artistic. Yoga is commonly used to describe asana practice. Or maybe it is just a word so easily spoken with breath yet barely encompasses what we've yet to learn. - Yoga is all of these and none of these.

Yoga denotes the art and science of living, understanding yourself, your body, mind, spirit and death. Yoga means to yoke, connect, wholeness and union.

And it has been one week today. One week of hiking up the mountain side to class. One week of getting to know my roommate. One week of sharing moments with my teachers and classmates. One week of gourmet vegetarian food. One week of floating. And one week of learning and unlearning yoga.

White Lotus. A non-for-profit organization here to teach people to become teachers and strengthen practices.

I sit next to the Kiva and orange trees overlooking the day's old fog lingering over Santa Barbara valley. It's sunny, however, where I am sitting.

I'm listening to the various birds sing and the background noise of the passing cars. So far up in the hills, but no so far away from the constant, moving, modern life.

We are presented with a gourmet vegetarian meal three times a day. We have lectures, asana practice, practicals, pranayama and free time. Tomorrow, a day off and shortly, a massage.

It is beautiful. Simple. Awesome. Blissful. Unbelievable. If you want to become a student in life again, become a teacher. If you want to master something, become a teacher.



WHITE LOTUS - DAY ??

I'm overwhelmed yet completely content. I feel focused and full of new information. I still have no idea how I ended up here.

I'm not sure how to sum up any of my experience yet nor how to balance all of the new information in my head.

When I talked to my boyfriend on the phone I briefly described a new change on the horizon and all of the new things I was learning. He said, "Well, are you learning how to cook?"

WHITE LOTUS - DAY ???

My days are still blurred with yogic information - history, philosophy, alignment, adjusting, teaching, sitting, listening, chanting, breathing, absorbing.



In only a few more days we will all be yoga instructors. Is this real? Is this really happening? I love asana practice, however, am I ready to teach it? These feelings bring me SO close to when I became a skydiving instructor. I couldn't believe I had an instructor rating and felt that as new a teacher I knew nothing. I had to absorb it all it actual practice. I learned to communicate in a new language and to reach people through their fear or other blocks. I feel the same now being a yoga teacher.

head. Personalities are showing more and more each day from my classmates. It's interesting to watch the realness happen.

I'm starting to really miss home and am ready for this little journey to be over. I am SO



thankful for the information and am curious how I will find a balance of this new life with my life back in Hawaii.

I feel my new venture of yoga will be incorporated in skydiving. I envision "Skydiving Meets Yoga Retreat" (in Hawaii of course).

and I ran short by 2 minutes so I had to dig deep for real "intuitive flow!"

After two weeks of lectures, circles, alignment classes, breathing, getting to know 29 strangers and flointing, I am now a yoga instructor.

I announced at my dad's memorial almost four years ago that a legacy is not over, that a new one is just beginning. Today, I truly feel that the new legacy has been breached.



Thank you Ganga, Tracey and Sven for your faithfulness in following your heart so for the rest of us who still seek may have a place to gather and encourage a yogic path.

Aloha, Namaste.



LEAVING.

Wow. 16 days gone like the sun meeting the horizon at dusk. No more morning hikes from the Om Shanty. No more meals prepared for me each day. No more structured living. No more classmates. And no more Ganga, Tracey and Sven to meet in the living room.

The testing was an interesting experience not having taken a test in such a long time. And the teaching task was humorous! We had to make up a 10-minute class

WHITE LOTUS DAYS.

Testing. Teaching. Testing. Teaching. That's all that's in my

