

Report BK Ecological Retreat for Europe & the Middle East

Lisbon 12 to 16 July

Being with Nature

The retreat was hosted and very well taken care of by our sweet Portuguese family in Baba's beautiful vegan home in Lisbon. The participants came from the Austria, France, Holland, Portugal, Switzerland and UK.

During the retreat, we had meditations for serving each one of the five elements and connecting with them in a new and healthy way. We used sitting and walking meditations in Baba's home and the Monsanto Park.



On the Friday morning, we looked deeply into the understanding we can develop through exploring with spirituality the story and interaction of human beings, nature and God through time. The participants looked deeply into ways that would allow us to form new healthier relationships with fellow human beings, environment and the world.



We also looked at the true meaning of sustainability. We valued our capacity to make new choices. We can create and sustain healthier relationships with matter and people through our own purity and life styles. The participants looked at what changes they could be making in their lives for more sustainable living. If so what form would they take?

Sister Helen is an acupuncturist working with the 5 elements. She shared with us the traditional understanding of the interaction of human beings with the five elements. She described the consequences it has both for our health and the inner balance of the human being.





We also had the experience of an Art Activity. Using the arts:

- To deeply discover and explore myself and emerge my virtues i.e. 'The colour of my qualities'
- To create a healthy and beautiful relationship with nature by exploring and emphasising my unique qualities.
- To play with colours and forms in a simple way to enable your qualities to emerge.

Using your creativity connects you with your inner self in a surprising and true way. It brings out a colourful image of your virtues that words cannot touch.

Silvia and Claudio performed very special songs from their new albums and old favourites in the evening, bringing a sense of wonder and beauty to the retreat.

On the Sunday morning Valériane presented “Living the change”, an interfaith project Brahma Kumaris is involved with.



<https://livingthechange.net/>



Our common home

Earth is a blessing. She supports life and is the basis of all our economies. She conveys beauty and evokes our recognition of something greater than ourselves. She is our temple, our mosque, our sanctuary, our cathedral. Our home.

Our shared journey

Our faith offers guidance on how to live our best lives. Healthy, balanced relationships, wherein greed is understood to be wrong, help sustain Earth as our collective home. As people of faith, we are committed to make changes in our own lives. Together, we come with a call to venture on a journey towards sustainable living. We invite you to join us in Living the Change.

1 - Eco-friendly TRANSPORTATION

What: Using a more sustainable method of transport. Moving towards a car-free life and avoiding transport by airplane as much as possible.

Why: Living car-free for a year saves 2.4 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, while each round trip transatlantic flight avoided saves an additional 1.8 tonnes.



2 - Reducing ENERGY use

What: Most of the energy we use in our buildings for heating, lighting, appliances, hot water, and cooking comes from burning fossil fuels (coal, gas, or oil). We burn them either directly or indirectly through the use of electricity. Instead, one can switch to green energy tariffs, create one's own renewable energy sources, and phase out energy from fossil fuels.

Why: Moving towards renewable energy sources can save up to 1.6 tonnes of CO₂ per year per person



3 - Plant-based DIET

What: Transitioning from a meat and dairy-based diet to a plant-based diet, as well as reducing food waste.

Why: Eating a plant-based diet saves 0.8 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year. This represents 4 times more greenhouse gas emissions per year than recycling. Plus, it is the most ethical approach, and also helps improve health and well-being!

During the rest of the morning, the participants were divided into country groups to see how each country would be able to put the project into action.

Kemin's experience:



I have realised from this Green Retreat the relationship between spirituality and nature. How can I, as a Brahma Kumari, bring back to the Mother Nature love and peace through my relationship with the Supreme Soul?