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Why Broughton Sanctuary offers just the tonic you need

Broughton Sanctuary in Yorkshire is a country retreat, which also offers the Hoffman Process, a week-long personal growth programme that promises to help you reboot, says Caroline Phillips



by Caroline Phillips



WENT TO Broughton Sanctuary in Yorkshire upset, exhausted and hobbling after an accident. I was facing a personal crisis, my father's illness and litigation. And also tackling selling my family home, empty-nest syndrome and finishing writing a book.

My batteries didn't so much need recharging as replacing. If I could have waved a magic wand and become someone else, a new person, I would have. I was there because I had booked onto the Hoffman Process, a week-long personal growth retreat. Would that do the trick?

I arrived a day before it started to meet Broughton Sanctuary owner and Process devotee, Roger Tempest. He's the 32nd generation custodian of the Tempest family seat of nearly 1,000 years.

Forget doing the Process in an anonymous hotel or retreat centre with shared bathrooms. He has transformed his 16th century stately pile with Georgian and Victorian additions from a crumbling, damp liability with no heating and decrepit outbuildings to a retreat venue cum home for hire of squillion-star splendour with its state-of-the-art Avalon Wellbeing Centre, holidaymakers' cottages and offices.

Today, more than 600 people work, stay, play and find their souls on the estate. And with not a hunt or shoot in sight and on land soon to be free of weedkillers, antibiotics, hormones and vaccines.



We met for lunch at Utopia, architect Sir Michael Hopkins' glassy vision of a garden bistro, set in the estate's walled garden. During The Process, meals are taken in the house. But Utopia is available for nosh afterwards. It serves only plant-based food — “As good for you as the planet,” as the menu boasts. Roger, 60, a visionary, has long hair and a mind that hops around in brilliant and wacky directions. We ate and drank mushrooms (non-hallucinogenic tea), and corn fritters drizzled with delicious homemade tomato sauce. And discussed the retreats Roger has hosted at home since 2019 — now 50 of them annually. Their names — Path of Love, Men Without Masks to Rising Connected Women — give you a flavour. That Native American drumming ceremonies are held among classical marble busts of the Popes and 17th century oils gives you another sense.

The retreats are led by the likes of Ruby Wax, Rupert Sheldrake (he of morphic resonance fame, exploring telepathy and sympathetic vibrations) and Peter Levine (guru of trauma healing and Somatic Experiencing).

Roger and his partner Paris Ackrill, 33, a lithe yogi and toddler's mum, have also created and run, Visions for the Future. “We gather,” says Roger, “the wise and wonderful to connect with spirit and generate positive social change.”

Then there's the Hoffman Process. Established globally 55 years ago and co-founded in the UK in 1997 by former Bond girl Serena Gordon and her ex-husband Tim Laurence, its merits are extolled by erstwhile participants, including Thandie Newton, Sienna Miller to Katy Perry, CEOs, lawyers and masters of the universe. “After doing it,” says Roger, as I scribbled furiously, “there was no going back without living an unsatisfactory and half-lived life. On my quest to release myself from the shackles of the past and inappropriate social conditioning, The Process was a seminal moment with key breakthroughs.”



After lunch I explored Broughton Sanctuary, snooping in all 17 bedrooms, its Victorian glass house with rare plants collected from all over the world and billiard room. I checked out the three grand rooms (soon to house Process participants nursing small cushions representing their inner child): all rooms with antiques, chandeliers and mementoes from former Tempest family friends, including Queen Mary and Mother Teresa, someone with whom Roger's mother, Janet, worked.

I discovered a house with soaring ceilings and damask curtains that tumble from the heavens. Freestanding copper baths, four-poster beds and gilt mirrors. And genial, nothing's-too-much-trouble house staff.

It was like being a guest in someone's home, with no locks on the bedroom doors. The late Colonel Tempest's leather riding boots stand in the hall and a bell pull for 'Mrs Tempest's Room' is in the scullery. The Chapel Flat has its own private kitchen and sitting room. Everywhere is homely, toasty, with piping hot water and all mod cons. After a childhood spent with frost inside his windows, Roger never wanted his pad to be cold again.

A five-minute woodland walk away is the Avalon Wellbeing Centre, designed in 2019 on the principles of sacred geometry. Its hall was where we ended up bashing huge cushions (er, not the ones representing our inner child) with baseball bats, releasing pent up emotions on The Process.

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And there's also a lap pool that overlooks the forest, with the trees and clouds reflecting in the pool water. Roger's idiosyncratic approach to country living continues in the centre's slower-paced Yin yoga, alchemy crystal bowl sound baths, floatation tank, to cold water immersion. Outside, forest bathing and woodland dining are on offer. Or a sweat lodge, walking a labyrinth, moon meditation and a woodland sauna.

It was possible to do only swimming and sauna on our free afternoon during The Process. But because I was early, I was greedy. I had a stint in a floatation tank (where my buoyant, supported and relaxed body tensed with 'shock waves' whenever I had angry thoughts) and enjoyed an excellent reflexology session with their intuitive therapist, Lucy. (I'd scarcely been able to sit down when I lay on her couch, following my coccyx injury, apparently the chakra associated with creativity, sensuality and sexuality). And I chilled in a Somadome, a techie meditation pod which was the first of its kind in the UK. I took it on trust that said machine offered both colour light and sound therapy, alongside crystals and powerful, healing magnets. Reader, I fell asleep.

Next day, I started The Process. I'm going to tell you nothing about my extraordinary group of fellow travellers, because confidentiality and privacy are central. And I'm not going to reveal anything more about the intense, condensed, experiential and life-changing programme: you simply need to try it.

All I'll say is that I left with my batteries changed and charged. A better version of me. And one with a tool box for life. So yes, reader, it did the trick.

Ivy Cottage (two guests) starts from £173 per night based on a three-night stay.

Exclusive hire rate for Broughton Sanctuary is £9,000 +VAT per night (min three-night stay). broughtonsanctuary.co.uk

The Hoffman Process costs £3,700 for a seven-day retreat; £4,000 at Broughton Sanctuary. The next Process at Broughton Sanctuary is March 30-5 April 2024. hoffmaninstitute.co.uk

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