

Emergence Nature Quest 2025

17th – 26th July

Dyfi Valley, Mid Wales, UK

With Fern Smith and Philip Ralph, Artists & Wilderness Guides



Are you facing a turning point in your life?

Are you wanting to undergo a rite of passage in nature?

Looking for a ritual to mark a beginning, ending or transition from one life-stage to another?

The Nature Quest/Vision Fast is a powerful nature-based ceremony designed to support you to become the person you were born to be. It is an opportunity to listen to the still small voice deep inside, calling you into your next state of becoming. This voice challenges and encourages you to become whole and to dedicate yourself to becoming fully human - the true work of a lifetime. This Vision Fast in Nature provides a holding structure enabling you to enter sacred time and let go of all that is not necessary, all that is superfluous in manifesting your future self. You will undertake this challenge both for yourself and on behalf of the community of all beings in this time of fragmentation and transition.

Nature Quest/Vision Fast is a time of being in community as well as in solitude. You will open yourself to the potency of the living world, whilst communing with the elements of earth, air, fire, water and spirit. It is a time of emptying and surrendering to unknowing, whilst simultaneously opening up to the future realms of potential and possibility. Vision Fast is a powerful initiatory ceremony which can be undertaken for any reason and at any time of life. It is deeply grounded in nature and in the body.

Integral to the process, are the ancient and modern teachings of 'The Four Shields of Human Nature' - the four directions, the four elements and the four seasons. The experience of the Vision Fast can be divided into three distinct phases – Separation (or Severance), Threshold and Incorporation. We begin our time in community, each initiate sharing and speaking to what has called you here.

You will be supported to craft your own specific 'Statement of Intent' - the motivation behind your call to consciously enter into ceremonial time. After this initial phase of preparation, you will be prepared to safely enter your time alone in the natural world. We will guide you through the process of finding your unique place on the land which will support you in your solo fast. There, you will spend four days and nights alone with minimal shelter, no food, technology or distractions. Each initiate enters the threshold of their own formlessness, and opens to the teaching and healing of the land. **Each initiate undergoes a 'threshing,' where what is no longer relevant or necessary is acknowledged, thanked and let go.**



Each of the four days involves connecting to an element and a passage of life – childhood, adolescence, adulthood and eldership/birth. Each phase is consciously marked. The initiate is given various practices to enact whilst on the land and is encouraged to find their own ways of generating self-directed, personal ceremonies.

The culmination of the four days and nights involves an invitation to stay awake for the entirety of the last night looking into the darkness, making vigil whilst waiting for the first rays of morning. **During this time, the initiate asks for a vision,** for guidance, speaking prayers, revisiting the biography and patterns of their life lived to date. The rising of the sun on this final morning marks a new phase in the initiate's life – the beginning of future potential and possibility.

Each initiate will return to the group after their solo time, each will be welcomed, given food and celebrated in a ritual manner. The time that follows is one of community and sharing stories. Each initiate speaks of their solo time, is witnessed by all and their story is mirrored back to them by the guides. This marks the beginning of the incorporation phase which continues for days, weeks and months after.

The Emergence Nature Quest takes place in the beautiful landscape of mid Wales. It is led by Wilderness Guides Fern Smith and Philip Ralph, trained with the School of Lost Borders, David Wendl-Berry of Earth Encounters and Pip Bondy of Ancient Healing Ways.

This beautiful and powerful ceremony is based on and inspired by the 'Four Shields of Human Nature' as taught by Steven Foster and Meredith Little and developed as a pan-cultural ceremony by the [School of Lost Borders in California](#).

Emergence Vision Fast Guides



Fern Smith

Fern is an artist and wilderness guide, trained at the School of Lost Borders in California. She first Quested with David Wendl Berry in 2011. Since then she has been bringing earth based practices and the Four Shields consciously into her work. Her background is as a theatre practitioner and co-founder of [Volcano Theatre](#). She developed [Emergence](#) in 2010, creating spaces for transformation, nature connection and dialogue. She is an associate of the Annwn Foundation, craniosacral therapist, celebrant and coach. www.fernsmith.uk



Philip Ralph

Phil is co-director of Emergence. He has studied Way of Council, undertaken Vision Quest and also assisted Pippa Bondy of Ancient Healing Ways. Phil is also an award-winning writer and performer. www.philipralph.com

Practicalities

The first part of the process will be in and around our home - an 18th century Welsh cottage in the hills outside Machynlleth. Accommodation will be in the luxurious adjacent 'barn' or camping in the grounds which also includes a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Initiates will have the use of The Barn kitchen to cook in and can cook together or everyone can look after their own needs. As we move towards the threshold time and the heart of the Vision Fast, we will leave for basecamp and the surrounding hills of the Cambrian Mountains. We return to Nant y Gwenill towards the end of our time together to share stories and formally complete the process.



Food

We will provide simple vegetarian meals which we will cook together. This will be included in the fee. There will of course be 4 days and nights of fasting where no food will be eaten. Initiates are taken out for lunch in Machynlleth to mark the start of incorporation. You will need to bring money to buy this.

Preparation

As part of an initial contemplation phase we suggest that we have a conversation on the phone/in person with you to ensure that this Vision Fast is appropriate for you.

After this conversation, we invite you to write your letter of intention which should be no less than 1 page and not more than 4 pages of A4. As part of this you will speak about where you have arrived at in your life and how you see the Vision Fast fitting in. We ask you to give an outline of your intention which you will carry forward into the process. You will also need to include information on your biography and any emotional, mental or physical challenges you are living with.

We will send then you a handbook which gives more information about the ceremony you are about to undertake. One month prior to the quest, we ask you to complete a dawn to dusk 'Mirror Walk in Nature'. We will send you more information about this in due course.

Six weeks after the completion of your Vision Fast we offer an optional phone or in person meeting to support the incorporation of your ceremony.

Payment

The cost of the Vision Fast includes accommodation at basecamp (and some meals – see above). This also includes £50/person which is donated to the stewards of the land where we spend our threshold time. There are a range of accommodation options which includes single occupancy in a double room, shared twin room and camping. The accommodation options are reflected in the tiered pricing. Full details are listed below.

This is a ten-day process working with small groups of a maximum of 7 people guided by two Rites of Passage guides. The cost covers all guiding fees, including a process to prepare each initiate before arrival, accommodation and all meals whilst at basecamp, your Vision Fast Handbook and a contribution towards the land for the solo time.

Camping option £850 (bring your own tent, or campervan - we provide your pitch).
Room in The Barn/Farmhouse £975.
On-site caravan £900

A £200 non-returnable deposit secures your place. Payment can be made in instalments. The Vision Fast in Nature is limited to a small group of up to 8 initiates. If we have a very small group we will offer the Fast with one rather than two guides to make it financially viable. If this fee is prohibitive, we invite you to speak to us and we can discuss a mutually workable arrangement. We encourage people to book early – at least six months before the fast as this is a powerful ceremony which requires commitment and preparation. The closing date for prospective initiates to contact us is May 1st. All fees must be made by June 1st.

Fasting & Medical Issues

If medical issues preclude you from fasting (seek advice from your doctor), this is not an obstacle to participation. Please contact us to discuss.

**For more information and/or a conversation,
contact Fern Smith & Philip Ralph:**

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*Emergence:
Supporting transformational spaces
for dialogue and inner, outer and nature connection.
www.emergence-uk.org*