Emergence Nature Quest 2027

15th – 24th July

Mid Wales, UK

With Fern Smith and Philip Ralph,
Artists & Wilderness Guides



Are you facing a turning point in your life?
Are you ready 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 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.

"Doing the Nature Quest with Fern and Phil was a precious and helpful experience for me. Their home where you prepare is beautiful, welcoming and full of life and knowledge. The land they found us for the Quest was stunning and also varied. There were places for those who wanted more of an edge and there were places like the one I stayed in that were kindly and beautiful. Phil and Fern are skilled, caring and fun and a joy to be with. The food was delicious much of it grown by Fern and cooked by Phil with love. Nature was a guide, healer and place of wonder and within it I was able to recognise my place as nature too. I am very grateful for the healing it enabled me to do. For anyone interested in doing a Nature Quest I would very much recommend Emergence and Fern and Phil." (Kian)

Nature Quest 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. Nature Quest 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 Nature Quest 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.

"Being on a Nature Quest guided by Fern and Phil was a profound and intense experience which had both the warm familiarity of a homecoming and the transformational expansiveness of immersion in the liminal unknown. With their knowledge, experience and whole selves they weave an extraordinary container: a place and a time full of love, care, companionship, generosity, openness and connection that is also absolutely grounded and real. A space with both safety and edge that can be both messy and mythic. A rich soil to grow my Quest's intentionality and structure, to go out with onto the land, and to return anew." Rob

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.**

"What I take from this encounter is how Fern and Philip authentically live what they guide. They have a deep connection through their chosen way of living, the space that they care for and the landscape that they love. I felt deeply in my being their respect for the process, their care, their love and concern. Sometimes I could see the amazement in my heart reflected in their eyes. There is no doubt that I will weave this into my life practice." Jane



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**.

"I went to Nature Quest with the intention of putting an end to the 'old story'; to the nagging voice in my head of the shoulds, the oughts and the self-criticism. On every step towards Nature Quest, that voice perched smugly on a branch in my head saying It'll never work. But it did. With guides who know their work, know the power of ceremony, who pour their hearts, their work and wisdom into every aspect, I was supported through an extraordinary transformation. That voice has been released into the wild. Of course it will visit, and there will be times when I will find myself inviting it in, but I have tasted freedom. I have heard the silence without it. I have felt how much space it has taken up in my mind and I feel well-resourced to keep it at bay. I have powerful memories of marking the moment of its release and I'm in profound gratitude to Fern and Phil for helping me to fulfil my intention with such authentic faith, care and practical support." Emily



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 Nature Quest, 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.



Preparation

As part of an initial contemplation phase we invite a conversation on zoom to ensure that this Nature Quest is appropriate for you. You will also have the opportunity to speak about what you are marking and ask any questions regarding the process and preparation.

After this conversation, we ask you to write your 'letter of intent', 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 Nature Quest 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, specific turning points in your life and share any emotional, mental or physical challenges you are living with.

One month prior to the Nature 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 Nature Quest we offer an optional phone or in person meeting to support the incorporation of your ceremony.

Food

We will provide vegetarian and vegan meals. 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.

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.

Payment

The cost of the Nature Quest includes all accommodation at basecamp (5 nights) and all meals. This also includes £50/person which is given to the stewards of the land where we spend our threshold time. There is a range of accommodation options from single occupancy of a room to camping, van or caravan. Accommodation options are reflected in the tiered pricing. Full details are listed below.

This is a ten-day process working with small groups of 4-7 people guided by two Rites of Passage guides. The cost includes the process to prepare each initiate before arrival, all guiding fees, accommodation and all meals whilst at basecamp, your Vision Fast Handbook and a contribution towards the land for the solo time. We also offer an optional online follow-up period of reflection after you leave us.

We have THREE tiers of payment.

The first is the Emergence (Pay It Forward) Supporter Rate. This enables us to continue to offer subsidised spaces on the Quest and retreats: £1,200

The second is the Standard Rate: £1,100

The third is the Subsidised Rate: £1,000 (either camping or in the caravan)

A £250 non-returnable, non-transferable deposit secures your place. Payment can be made in instalments. The Nature Quest is limited to a small group of up to 7 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 as this is a powerful ceremony which requires commitment and preparation.

Staying on After the Retreat

There may be the possibility to arrive early or to stay in The Barn after the retreat has finished for an additional cost depending on availability. Please ask as soon as possible if you are interested in this possibility.

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, trauma bodyworker, facilitator, celebrant and coach. www.fernsmith.uk

Philip Ralph

Phil is co-director of Emergence, a facilitator of rites of passage work and spaces for change. He trained in theatre at RADA where he acquired an early perspective on the power of story as a catalyst for change. He has practised Way of Council, undertaken and lead Nature Quests and also assisted Pippa Bondy of Ancient Healing Ways for over a decade. Phil is also an award-winning stage and screen writer and performer. He is a sought-after voice speaking about challenge and change in the TV industry. www.philipralph.com




"Nature Quest has been a remarkable experience for me, in the lead up, whilst there, as well as on return. Fern and Phil provided a warm, safe and nurturing environment in which I felt comfortable to be myself, as well as to enjoy the inspiring thoughts, ideas, conversations and laughter of the group. The atmosphere of the farmhouse and the group room that is used at Phil and Fern's home also felt like a wonderful space to talk of shared and individual experiences on return from the solo fast – at a most magical piece of land that we shared for 4 days." Jon

For more information and/or a conversation contact Fern or Phil:
info@emergence-uk.org

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