



HEART & Soul
YOGA AND WELLNESS

GUEST MANUAL

Welcome to your Personal
Retreat Experience





ABOUT US

We wish to acknowledge the elders past and present of the Tharawal people, the Traditional Owners of Country in this region, which now nurtures us, as it has them, since time immemorial.

Heart & Soul Retreats, based at Govinda Valley in Otford, is located at the foot of the Royal National Park, one of the oldest natural reserves in the world.

We provide a haven for our guests to rest, relax and rejuvenate while immersing themselves in yoga, mindfulness, self-development, delicious vegan food and the spectacular natural surroundings our region has to offer.

Come along, breathe free and relax - this is your time.

OUR MISSION

As a yogic community aspiring to live a simple, clean and spiritually fulfilling lifestyle, we aim to role model a practical balance between material and spiritual life.

Our foundations are built on the **Bhakti yoga tradition** - the yoga of love and service - which is the essence that runs through the heart and soul of everything we do. We provide a simple, beautiful and nurturing space for our guests and community, that allows all of us to **come home to ourselves**, into a higher level of self-awareness, personal alignment and contribution to the greater good.

Heart & Soul is an inclusive and open-minded platform for people at all stages of life, practices and backgrounds, to grow and deepen their experience of true health, wellbeing, spirituality and conscious growth. We welcome and celebrate individual differences, knowing that if recognised as strengths and nurtured properly, we can enrich and bring out the best in each other.

SOULFUL AND HEARTFELT

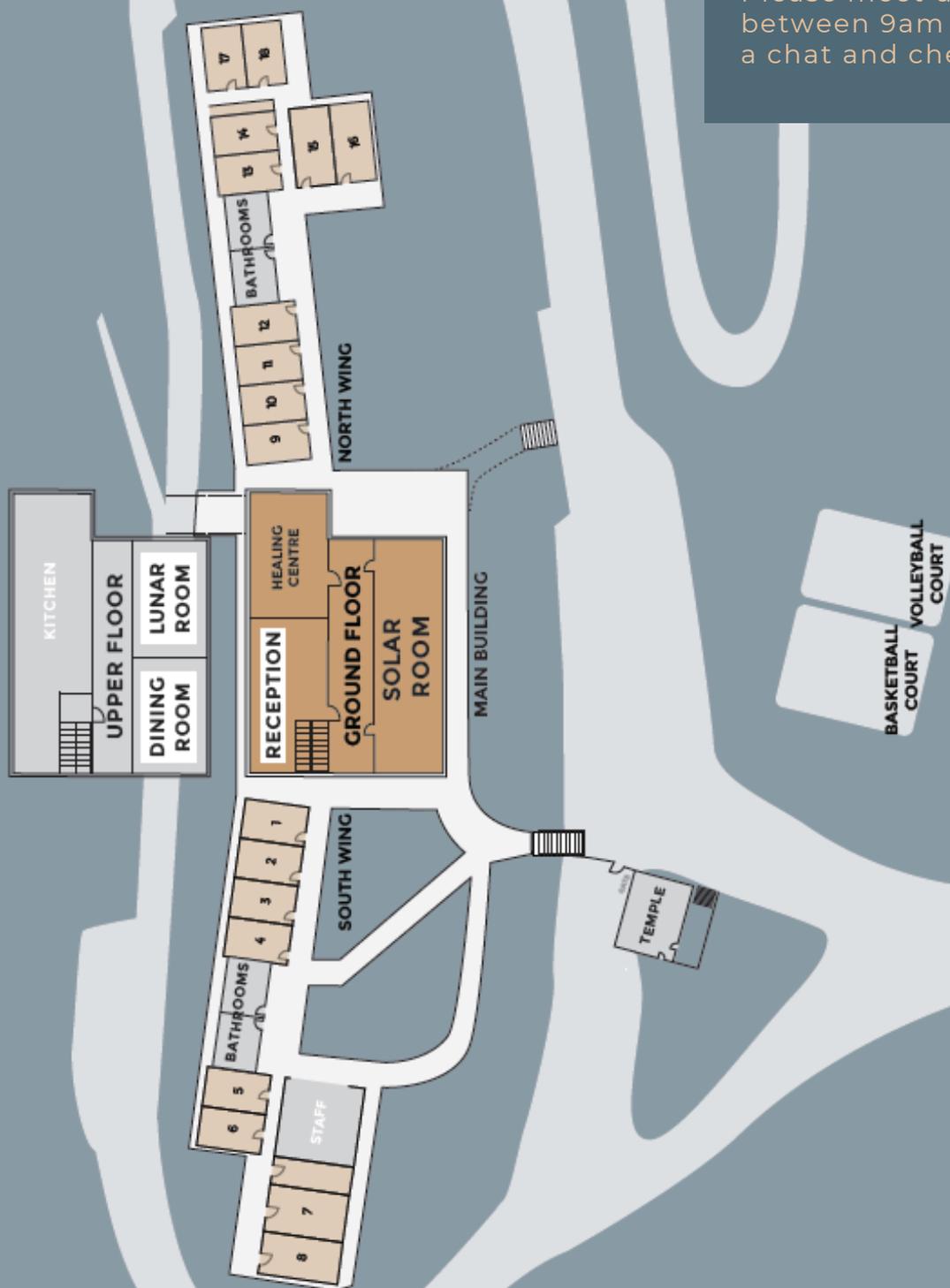
Coming from a place of care - not only for each other, for the environment and mother earth at large - we work towards creating a completely eco-friendly and sustainable community, that showcases '**simple living, high thinking**' and inspires our guests to integrate elements of mindfulness, sustainability and - if they desire - spiritual practice into their own lives.

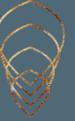
Even our business model itself, being a non for profit, is based on the idea of contribution to each other and the greater good. By providing for mind, body and soul equally, we develop an inspired team and from there, can make the world a better place, one retreat and one guest at a time.



Heart & Soul Map

Should you arrive after hours, please use this map to find your way around. The Heart & Soul reception is located at the Ground Floor of the Main Building. Please meet us there between 9am and 5pm for a chat and check-in.





GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING

To provide you with the most healthy and peaceful environment at Heart & Soul, we follow certain housekeeping rules, laid out in our Code of Conduct. In addition, please observe the following rules:

Please join us in practicing **mindful silence** every night between 9pm and 6:30am.

Please **do not play loud music** at any time, as we are aiming to create a peaceful, yogic atmosphere. If you would like to listen to music, please use ear phones.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Guests come to our retreat centre to recharge, meditate, practice yoga and relax in a peaceful spiritual environment. Please observe our Code of Conduct so we can keep this place happy, healthy and in line with yogic culture.

VEGANISM

One principle most Eastern philosophies have in common is *ahimsa* - non violence towards all living entities. This is why we follow a vegan diet and avoid using animal products on our property. Thanks in advance for not bringing animal products with you and supporting our love for all living beings for the length of your stay.

NO INTOXICATION

At Heart & Soul, we look at the body as the temple of our soul. Yogic philosophy emphasises health and wellness, as they are seen to be instrumental to opening up the mind for spiritual practice and higher thinking. Thus, intoxicants (drugs, alcohol, nicotine, etc) are not acceptable on our property. This rule is strictly enforced - please understand that in this regard we follow a zero tolerance policy. Please abstain from any kind of intoxication, on and off the property, during the length of your stay.

CLEANLINESS

A clean and healthy environment is conducive to a clean and healthy mind and supports the flow of positive energy all around us. At Heart & Soul, we therefore show ourselves and each other respect by not only maintaining personal hygiene, but also by keeping our rooms and common areas tidy at all times.





PRACTICING YOGA AT HEART & SOUL

As a yogic community, we have an abundance of yoga teachers living and working with us. Their individual styles vary, but the overarching theme is one of **balance, relaxation and alignment** of body, mind and soul.

Classes generally cater for beginners, but all teachers can give options for intermediate and advanced students, as well as adjustments for special requirements such as injuries, pregnancy etc. Just approach your teacher before class to let them know.



DAILY YOGA, WORKSHOPS AND KIRTAN

There are a variety of yoga classes, workshops and kirtans (mantra meditation) available every day. Please enquire at the Heart & Soul reception for the exact weekly schedule and daily specials, as they both may vary.

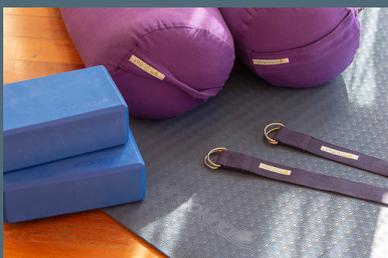
One of the highlights of the week is our special Kirtan night on Sunday evenings. Come along when we get together at 7pm at one of our yoga halls to join our voices in blissful mantra meditation.



SPACE FOR INTROSPECTION

Coming to a space for healing and introspection, guests often have powerful realisations - particularly during yoga and meditation classes. We ask you therefore to maintain silence in the yoga hall after classes have finished. You are welcome to take your conversations outside, so you don't accidentally disturb those who wish to stay and meditate or rest.





YOGA HALL ETIQUETTE

To ensure that all our guests are having a great experience during their stay at Heart & Soul, we request everyone to be considerate towards each other and the space itself. In most Eastern philosophies, teachers are highly respected guides and mentors - both along our material and spiritual path. Please respect your teachers and fellow students by adhering to the following rules:

PUNCTUALITY

You are welcome to show up for class as early as you like so you can settle into the space. However, **please do not enter once class has started.** This is especially important during yoga and meditation classes as it is disruptive for students and teachers alike. During Kirtans, you are welcome to enter at any time in case you are running late.

SAFETY

Please inform your teacher before any yoga class about injuries or other concerns, so that they can adapt their instructions to suit your needs. We advise that you don't try anything that could be painful for you. Yoga is not a competition, everything is optional.

CLEANLINESS

To maintain the clean environment in the yoga hall, please enter with clean feet and walk around the mats, rather than stepping onto them.

After every class, please spray and wipe down your mat, pack up the props neatly, and do not leave personal belongings behind.

We appreciate your cooperation and thank you for your kind support in keeping the space beautiful and nourishing.





MEAL TIMES

Our delicious vegan meals will be one of the highlights of your stay. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are all included in your booking. Please join us at the dining hall at the following times:

Breakfast: 8am - 9am
Lunch: 1pm - 2pm
Dinner: 6pm - 7pm



DELICIOUS VEGAN CUISINE

At Heart & Soul, we are passionate about inspiring people to eat a more healthy, vegan diet. We grow as much of our own food as we can in our beautiful organic garden, and otherwise source our ingredients as locally as possible. We are dedicated to inspiring as many people as possible to delve into the magic of vegan cuisine, discovering the rich tastes and textures that nature has to offer.



MADE WITH DEVOTION

Following our yogic tradition, the meals we provide are all completely cruelty-free, based on the ancient Vedic principle of *ahimsa* (Sanskrit: non-violence). All our food is *prasadam* - sacred food prepared in a consciousness of loving service. Like in many cultures around the world, we offer our food before we eat to say Grace and thank the Divine for the sun, the rain, and all the visible and invisible blessings necessary to co-create a delicious meal.





GETTING HERE

By Train: Otford train station is right at our doorstep. It takes just over an hour to get here from Sydney CBD or Sydney airport.

By Car: We are located one hour south of Sydney CBD by car or train; 45 minutes from Sydney Airport. When driving please type "Govinda Valley Retreat" into your app or GPS instead of the address.



AMENITIES

Dining Hall: Our meals area provides a luxurious dining experience on the top floor of our main building, overlooking the untouched rainforest. In addition, there is a balcony space to enjoy your meals in fresh air, with beautiful views of the valley.

Bathrooms: There are two shared toilet and bathroom blocks on the property, located on either side of the main building. One block is located in the south wing, as you walk along the corridor towards the tea room. The other block is located along the north wing corridor.

Space to read and relax: Our small library and relaxation area is located on the side of the dining hall. You are also welcome to use the piano if you would like to play. However, please maintain mindful silence after 9pm and during workshops and yoga classes.

Healing Centre: Heart & Soul's healing centre incorporates traditional and modern healing practices such as Reiki, Massage, Astrology etc.. For details, please enquire at reception.

Free Wi-Fi: Our entire property is equipped with Wi-Fi to help you stay connected with your loved ones or other important commitments. Please see reception to get the current password.

Amenity limitations: As we use rain water, please keep the length of your showers to a minimum to reduce water wastage.

Have a play: We have a basketball hoop and a beach volleyball court at our property and plenty of green area to play.

Laundry: If your clothes need a wash, please see reception. We are happy to offer laundry services for \$10/load.





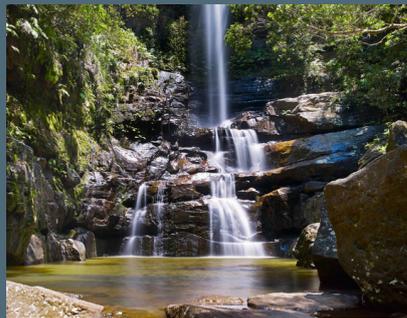
SUSTAINABILITY

We take sustainability and environmental welfare seriously and do our best to minimise our impact on the environment. In this spirit, we are constantly looking for ways to keep improving.

We are self-reliant in regards to our water, using purified rainwater from our tanks for drinking and cooking and other collected water for our showers and washing. We grow as much of our own organic food as possible and try to build what we need with recycled materials.

Our vegetable gardens and flower beds serve as an example and we constantly pass our knowledge on to interested volunteers and guests. In this way, we hope to inspire people to use sustainable and eco-friendly gardening methods such as permaculture. We are advised in these efforts by Milkwood, who regularly run their Permaculture Courses at our property.





THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

At Heart & Soul we are blessed in many ways, but especially in terms of our location. Nestled into the mountains of the Royal National Park and bordered by a beautiful creek, our retreat space is built on 20 acres of gently rolling hills, gardens and bushland. Enjoy peaceful nature walks and meet a variety of wildlife such as parrots, kookaburras, kangaroos, deer, etc.. The relaxed and nurturing energy of the valley is the perfect place to unwind, heal and connect.

KELLYS FALLS

Kellys Falls is a picnic area located within the Garawarra State Conservation Area, just 6 minutes from Heart & Soul. With a network of walking trails, cascading waterfalls and four stunning lookout points, it offers amazing views of waterfalls and rainforest.

ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

Located just a short walk from our retreat centre, the breathtakingly beautiful Royal National Park will surely satisfy your cravings for nature and wildlife. Characterised by coastal cliffs, secluded beaches and eucalypt rich bushland, the park is a perfect getaway for nature enthusiasts or those looking to have some quiet time in nature. The park is inhabited by kookaburras, lyre birds and echidnas.

BALD HILL LOOKOUT

The steep 30-minute walk up to the Bald Hill Lookout is a great workout for your legs. Bald Hill is one of the Illawarra's most famous and popular lookouts. The area is known internationally as a major hot spot for hang gliders.





GLOW WORM TUNNEL

Use the Glow Worm Tunnel walking track as the fastest and easiest way to experience the wonder of this historic tunnel, lit by thousands of glow worms. It's a favourite with visitors to Wollemi National Park, near Lithgow.

WATTAMOLLA PICNIC AREA

The area boasts a natural lagoon, waterfalls, rock pools, the sea and plenty of secluded beach space for you to take a relaxing walk or unwind.

SEA CLIFF BRIDGE

This 665 metre long bridge offers great views of the ocean and a spectacular viewing platform for whales heading north/south during the migrating season. The Sea Cliff Bridge is accessible via Coalcliff station, with only a 15 minute walk from the station to the bridge.

FIGURE 8 POOLS

The Figure 8 Pools are a natural wonder you have to see for yourself. Located on a rock ledge south of Burning Palms Beach in the Royal National Park, they are best to visit for a swim during low tide.

OTFORD LOOKOUT

A short 20mins walk from our retreat centre, Otford Lookout is located at the south eastern end of the Royal National Park on Lady Wakehurst Drive. As part of the popular Coastal Walk track, it offers stunning views along the coast, south towards Wollongong and north along the Royal National Park. A favourite spot for many to stop and take a snap.





PLACES OF SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Heart & Soul Retreat has great spiritual significance in terms of its location. Apart from providing a spiritual sanctuary right here at our retreat centre, we are also very close to two spiritual gems in the vicinity of Sydney and Wollongong. The largest Buddhist temple in the southern hemisphere is located just a 30 minutes drive away .

NAN TIEN BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Nan Tien literally translates to "Paradise of the South". The temple is the largest Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere. Accessible every day except Mondays, the temple is open to visitors free of charge. Everyone is welcome to explore the expansive temple grounds, however the temple itself is best experienced and understood by joining a tour led by one of the highly trained guides.

SRI VENKATESWARA TEMPLE

A beautiful hour's walk or a quick two-minute drive will take you to the Sri Venkateswara Hindu temple. The temple is a sacred place of worship and a great representation of Hindu culture. It is built on top of a hilly area 400 feet above sea level. The temple has four *praharam* encircling corridors. There is also a road for motor vehicles to reach the temple





CONTACTS

In case you have any concerns or complaints please come and see us at the reception or give us a call - we are happy to help!

02 4294 1765

EMERGENCY CONTACTS AND MEETING POINT

In case of an emergency, please notify reception immediately. Should reception be closed, please call the emergency numbers displayed on the reception wall.

In the unlikely event that you get bitten by a snake, spider or tick, please remain calm and call reception so they can take you to Wollongong hospital to get it checked.

In case of a natural disaster such as bush fire, the meeting point is the Heart & Soul basketball court (see arrow below). Please familiarise yourself with the map and ensure you are aware of the easiest, quickest and safest route from your room to the meeting point.

