



inspiring UK getaways

The Creative Retreat on Scotland's east coast is a breathing space for the soul. Christelle Atenstaedt isn't the only one that thinks so.

For creative inspiration, head to The Creative Retreat in Gardenstown, Banffshire, owned and run by artist couple Carla and Bryan. Gardenstown is a tranquil fishing village that enjoys coastal walks, pebble beaches, archaeological ruins and a gentle pace of life. Set up in 2003, the retreat offers a chance to relax, unwind and get those creative juices flowing. Set in two 18th-century seaside cottages, a host of arts courses are offered, as well as excellent artist studios and spacious self-catering accommodation with wood burning stoves. Experience gorgeous sunsets, wild landscapes and Scotland's finest fresh food.

"A stay at The Creative Retreat gives people a chance to escape from the everyday," Carla believes. "A moment to stop and consider or reinvigorate and plan. An opportunity to try new media and techniques or to refine old ones." As well as all this, guests can also enjoy beachcombing, dolphin spotting and being creative. Gardenstown is a breathing space for the soul.

This retreat, which encourages the use of recyclable and recycled materials in the workshops, offers a variety of inspirational artistic courses, encompassing painting, drawing, textiles and abstract art. Families are also well catered for with fun family art weeks. "The studios are a great place for kids to make a mess!" says Carla with a smile. Guests can enjoy 24-hour access to the workspace and all materials are provided. Teaching methods are geared towards personal tuition rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Visitors comprise experienced artists and those new to art, following the belief that we can all learn from each other.

Carla and Bryan both have a strong background in the arts. Bryan studied painting in Aberdeen while Carla took theatre design in Nottingham. As active and prolific artists, they belong to the Banffshire Artists Collective, a group of local professional artists. A vibrant arts scene exists in the region and the retreat is actively involved in it. Keeping up with their own creative pursuits keeps them fresh in their teaching. They tutor classes at the retreat along with fellow teacher Anne, and say their real passion is working with other people to release their creativity.

The idea to set up The Creative Retreat was conceived following a holiday in Scotland. Carla and Bryan wanted to escape the city and create a space for people to explore their own artistic side. "Gardenstown seemed the ideal place for the retreat – unspoilt, stunning coastline and charming village architecture," remembers Carla. "We were living in Bristol at the time, so it was quite an epic move with a two-year-old, a new baby and granny in tow!" Although Bryan's ancestors hail from Banffshire, the



"Leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you'll discover will be wonderful. What you'll discover is yourself." Alan Alda



couple had no real connections to Gardenstown itself, but found that the local community extended them a very warm welcome.

Expect to come away from The Creative Retreat feeling rejuvenated, with creative passions ignited. The team has observed that people often leave with definite plans about joining art groups, creating studio space, or planning an exhibition. Sometimes people just need confirmation that their creativity hasn't disappeared since leaving school. Pablo Picasso agrees: "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

The Creative Retreat (www.creative-retreat.co.uk) is the perfect place to unleash your artistic flair, immerse yourself in nature's beauty and enjoy the ultimate chill out. The retreat's guestbook stands as testament to this experience. As one former guest puts it: "Leave your worries behind you – find yourself in your work. It's a magical place!" So don't forget your paintbrush. 🏠

Machynlleth is a mecca for the eco-aware

by Sophie Bartlett

Situated on the Snowdonian foothills, at the head of the River Dyfi estuary, Machynlleth is a small picturesque rural Welsh town that is making a name for itself as a major attraction for the ecologically-minded. Promoted as "a special place for people and nature", this little town uniquely engages with its surroundings and invites its visitors to do so too.

Back in 1973 The Centre of Alternative Technology (CAT) chose to set up in Machynlleth's old slate quarry due to the local abundance of natural resources and inspiring beauty. It was originally opened by "a crazy bunch of idealists"; their first windmill was made from a pair of old jeans! CAT swiftly gained backing and grew as it captured peoples' imagination, as it will yours. Today you can visit its seven acre visitor centre with organic gardens, adventure playground, shop and interactive displays, accessed by the water-pump cliff railway.

The town itself has organic cafes and alternative shops to explore. "Machynlleth is a magnet to eco-minded people looking for an interesting place to live," says Andy Rowland of Ecodyfi (the local regeneration organisation). Small businesses also thrive in the blend of cosmopolitan and eco-friendliness, the traditional and agricultural.



There are plenty of green places to stay too. The Corris Hostel – a converted school house – shares the town's eco-ambition with its environmental and celtic theme. Owner, Mike Parish, suggests that the area's shared innovative motivation springs from its Welsh heritage. Machynlleth was once the capital of Wales, where it independently held parliament in the 15th century, and you get a sense of this history when you visit the town's historic buildings.

Head over and discover what makes Machynlleth so special. Oh, and arriving by public transport would almost certainly win you some eco-brownie points! 🏠

A yoga retreat to put a spring in your step

by Sharon Henshall



Join *Inspired Times'* yogini, Lila, and fellow yoga expert, Dory, on a not-to-be-missed weekend retreat from 19th–21st March. Held at Shekinashram in Glastonbury, this Spring Equinox Yoga Retreat will be a weekend of rejuvenation, renewal, inspiration and well being.

Rid yourself of those winter toxins through yoga postures and breathing exercises, deep relaxation and Yoga Nidra. Delicious wholesome meals are on the menu, as well as superfood smoothies and special raw detox soups. Squeeze in a stroll up Glastonbury Tor for beautiful views of the Somerset countryside and benefit from the mystical energies of this sacred spot.

"Shekinashram offers a beautiful tranquil space. It is a place of sanctuary, inspiration and transformation," says Lila. "Glastonbury is long associated with spiritual aspiration and provides the perfect setting for a wonderful retreat." See www.yogaprema.org for more details. Spaces are snapped up quickly and so if all beds are taken, Lila will keep you posted for future retreats. This is one weekend that will certainly put a spring in your step. 🏠

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Go Slowly, Breathe and Smile

Contact Lynn/John: 01856 841207 or via@orkneyretreat.co.uk
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