

Winter ReCreation Weekend at Graymoor

by Skip Doyle

Each season, Graymoor hosts a ReCreation Weekend which consists of energetic outdoor activities, meditation time, and fellowship. The Winter ReCreation Weekend offers yoga, cross-country skiing at Fahnestock, and meditation. The love that Saint Francis of Assisi shared towards nature and all creatures is alive today in the Spiritual Life Center at the Graymoor ecumenical center run by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. In the same way that people of all faiths are drawn to Saint Francis' message of peace, simplicity and at-one-ment, people of all walks of life come to Graymoor. "What drew me to attend the Winter ReCreation Weekend," says Paul Brunn of Long Island, "is that it provides for time to share the outdoors with new people and at the end of the day come back to a nurturing setting with hearty meals where I can share on a friendly and spiritual level. It is always one of my favorite weekends away of the year." Says Jackie Lee, a three-time attendee, "The yoga after skiing is the perfect way to stretch, reflect, and wind-down after a day outdoors. The sessions are light-hearted, never any pressure, and the yoga instructor helps with practicing the positions."



The weekend begins on Friday evening as participants meet each other and share their most scenic, adventurous, and spiritual experiences in the Hudson River Valley. Saturday starts with a cross-country skiing clinic at Fahnestock State Park for beginners – rental equipment at Fahnestock makes it easy to try cross-country skiing. In the afternoon, participants ski on their own – Fahnestock has beginner, intermediate, and expert trails. Evening includes yoga and meditation. Sunday morning offers fellowship time, and while the program concludes with lunch, many participants enjoy Sunday afternoon at nearby Bear Mountain State Park or time on the grounds of Graymoor.



In describing the yoga and skiing sessions, leader Cris Parque says, "Yoga and cross country skiing are perfect complimentary activities. They are both physical manifestations of mindfulness of breathe. While skiing we focus on our breathe and gaze externally at the beauty of our surroundings. While practicing yoga we use our breathe to turn our gaze inward in order to behold the beauty and strength contained within. On a physical level during our retreat at Graymoor we will use yoga to prepare our bodies and minds in the morning for the rigors of skiing and help it to recover in the evenings through gentle stretching, breathe work and meditation. The serene grounds of Graymoor

provide a conducive tone for our group to stretch and renew from taxing daily life."

“You get a lot for your money.” is the common comment. Besides these instructor-led activities, Graymoor provides all meals and overnight accommodations for \$200 for single occupancy, or \$150 if sharing a room. Says Kate Riopel of New Jersey, “The weekend is immensely restorative. The woods of the Hudson Highlands are quiet and calm, though the outdoor activities are exhilarating, and the yoga really enhances the experience by providing a structured opportunity for stretching and meditation.”

The next Winter Recreation Weekend is scheduled for February 15-17. The Saturday program shifts to a day of moderate hiking if there is insufficient snow. Upcoming ReCreation weekends include the Summer program on June 21-23 which features a hiking tour of Beacon and a guided canoe tour of Constitution Marsh, and an Autumn program on September 27-29 which will have a Native American theme. To register for any of these ReCreation Weekends contact the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center at GSLC@atonementfriars.org or (845) 424-2111. For the complete upcoming Graymoor program schedule see the website www.GraymoorCenter.org

If you go:

The Spiritual Life Center of Graymoor is at the top of the hill at the Graymoor facility on Route 9 in Garrison, NY. Website: www.GraymoorCenter.org.

Fahnestock State Park is located on Route 301 in Carmel, NY. Cross-country ski rentals and snowshoe rentals are available. Website: nysparks.com/parks/133/details.aspx.
