



TAI CHI MOUNTAIN REFUGE with MINDFUL MOUNTAINS

SEPTEMBER 7th to 14th 2019

A PERSONAL OVERVIEW

I am very excited to have been asked by John Arnold of MINDFUL MOUNTAINS to lead this retreat in mid-September, taking place high-up in the Italian alps in a spectacular Mountain Refuge setting.

John started MINDFUL MOUNTAINS around ten years ago to give people an experience of mindfulness in exploring the mountains – the French and Italian alps – when skiing and hiking. He is a highly qualified ski coach, a life coach: a teacher in all areas of mindfulness, working one to one or in small teams, who in recent years has expanded his programme to include holistic and physical practice around meditation and personal development.

[Links to MINDFUL MOUNTAINS and John's story and experience are at the end of this piece.](#)

So, we are presented with a wonderful and rare opportunity.

These long-established, relatively remote *rifugi* offer those moving across the mountain landscape, hiking or skiing or tending livestock perhaps, much-needed warmth, rest, shelter, nourishment, perhaps even sanctuary – a sharing hostelry to individual or group – without the need to descend to the villages and towns at the end of each days' work or journey. I can think of no better situation in which to explore TAI CHI and MEDITATION. Amongst many reasons being: that we will be coming together in a way that must as nearly as possible replicate the origin-traditions of TAI CHI in a long-ago China.

There, the like-minded might muster in mountain forests above the valleys of agricultural cultivation; where instead to cultivate themselves – their physical wellbeing, their spiritual health – in a remoteness that lifted them into nature and weather and away from their day to day. This, after all, is what to retreat properly entails.

Stories abound from this period, particularly of pine-hidden recluses – as perhaps some few of those who had gathered remained sequestered – meditating in the high places, and some of these becoming sought after for

enlightenment-wisdom, who might vanish as a laugh into mist at the hard-breathing sound of an approaching seeker on the Path; thus the mystery worked.

Most inevitably came away, trekking down into the valleys, returning to their homes, their families and terraced fields, though maybe with an added brightness in the eye.

There: I have spun you a romance. It is of a kind much-loved by Chinese artists and poets who transformed this more-than folklore into paintings, into pottery and verse, creating their own landscape art tradition. It is called 'shan shui', meaning 'mountain water': to be seen not only with the eye or touched in the hand but, and most importantly, experienced in the mind.

Examples below.

Yet, these tales, these images and words, drew from a once-upon-a-time reality, a down-to-earth-ness that, to me and in my experience, is **not** entirely lost to legend. It is my strong belief that on a retreat such this, in a refuge such as ours, we will be able to uncover again a deep learning, both in ourselves and in our group.

In a physical, philosophical, and spiritual sense, and as I have come to practise and teach it over these many years, this is what TAI CHI actually means.

Imagine: the truth of this, the serious joy of it.

TIM

February 2019 in the Year of the Boar



丁酉年九月
初四日
王羲之
子孫

Shan Shui painting has existed for the best part of two thousand years, right up to the modern day. The image above is ink on silk from an album of fan decorations, made Qing dynasty 1897CE. Below: a hanging scroll, ink on silk, made Song dynasty C1000CE, eight hundred years earlier. It is inscribed, 'Taking a xin to visit a friend.' It is hard to see here, but two figures have just hurried over the bridge heading for the mountains; one is carrying the xin, a zither-like instrument, under his arm. Both images are represented here © Trustees of the British Museum.

MINDFUL MOUNTAIN links:

[Home Page >>>](#)

[About John Arnold >>>](#)

[Tai Chi Mountain Refuge Programme and Booking >>>](#)

With onward links to Rifugio Vieux Crest etc.

YOU CAN JOIN US

