***four psychedelic retreats in 2020***

![A close up of a map

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*Petri, G., et al. (2014)*

*the brain*

*on psilocybin*

*the brain*

*on placebo*

***introduction:*** There is growing evidence that psychedelic experiences can be very helpful for people who are doing fine in their lives, as well as for people suffering from a wide variety of psychological difficulties – see for example the post [*‘Recent psychedelic research: their use in the general population’*](http://goodmedicine.org.uk/stressedtozest/2019/01/recent-psychedelic-research-their-use-general-population), other posts under the general heading [*‘Potential benefits of psychedelics’*](http://goodmedicine.org.uk/goodknowledge/good-knowledge/psychedelics) and the linked PHP Scotland January *‘Psychedelic news’*. This information leaflet gives initial details of four six-day retreats for ‘general population’ participants scheduled to take place in the Netherlands in May, August, November & December this year. Modern research studies show that psychedelics taken with care are surprisingly safe (in contrast to some previous, now outdated media messages). See [*‘What are the risks?’*](http://goodmedicine.org.uk/stressedtozest/2019/01/recent-psychedelic-research-what-are-risks) for a discussion of these issues. All four of these retreats are being organised by [*Dr James Hawkins*](http://goodmedicine.org.uk/about) on behalf of the Scottish *Psychedelic Health Professionals Network* (PHP Scotland), and applications are open to both full members and friends of PHP (see joining details below). Each of the retreats runs for six days (five nights) in the Netherlands either at [*Meeuwenveen*](https://meeuwenveen.nl/en-accommodation/building-1-fits-like-a-glove) or at a countryside group centre near Apeldoom in the Veluwe region. Each retreat will involve two psychedelic *‘ceremonies’* using first a moderate and then a higher dose of legal psilocybin truffles. The retreats are to be facilitated by a mix of [*Coen de Koning*](https://www.therapeuticsittingservice.com/about-us) (an experienced psychedelic guide who has worked with James), James, and both Dutch & PHP Scotland colleagues .

***three standard ‘playlist’ retreats:***  These six-day (five-night) retreats are due to run from 3rd to 8th May, 10th to 15th August, and 7th to 12th December. You will also need to join PHP Scotland as a member or friend at a cost of £10. The retreats are for ‘general population’ participants rather than anyone currently struggling with significant psychological difficulties (where a 1:1 format is more appropriate). Participants will take a moderate dose of psilocybin truffles on the day after arrival at the retreat and a higher dose two days later, using the usual format of lying/sitting with eyes closed (with the option of a blindfold) and listening to a specifically designed music playlist. Plenty of time is set aside for preparation and integration. There will also be 1:1 video calls for everyone with a facilitator both before and after the retreat, and a continuing online integration group once we’ve returned from the Netherlands. Cost is between £750-950 (depending on income) for facilitation, accommodation & food. There will an extra charge of about £80 per head for a bus making the return journey between the retreat centre & Amsterdam, and about £50 for psilocybin truffles. The [*UK Psychedelic Society*](https://psychedelicsociety.org.uk/experience-retreats) is currently charg-ing over twice this amount for a similar retreat (for people on higher incomes) and [*Synthesis*](https://www.synthesisretreat.com/expansion) (another major retreat provider) over four times this rate. For more details & to apply, see below.

***november meditation retreat:*** This six-day (five-night) Autumn group, from the 8th to 13th November, is a bit different. It also runs at Meeuwenveen but doesn’t follow the usual music playlist/blindfold format of standard psychedelic retreats. Instead, it will take as its inspiration the research study from the Univer-sity of Zurich published last year in [*Scientific Reports*](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-50612-3)and [*Neuroimage*](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1053811919302952)*,* which very successfully combined a meditation retreat with psychedelics. These researchers were themselves building on [*work from John Hopkins*](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5772431/) which had already shown the synergistic effects of using psilocybin with meditation. This will be a retreat for people with an established meditation practice and also previous experience of psychedelics (at least a couple of earlier trips – maybe at the May or August retreats). The current planned format will be to arrive & meet each other on the evening of Sunday 8th November. On Monday we’ll all start four days of a sitting/walking/sitting meditation retreat structure. On the first full day, half the group will additionally take a low to moderate dose of psilocybin, while the other half of the group will stay clear of psychedelics and keep an eye out for those who are tripping. We’ll pair up, so those who are tripping have the option of a personal supporter throughout the day – including the possibility of spending some of the time [*outside in nature*](https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/16/24/5147). On the second full day, we’ll simply swap over the tripper/ sitter roles while still following the same meditation structure. On the third and fourth full days, we’ll repeat this rotation but this time using medium to high doses of psilocybin. Then on the last day we’ll review our experiences, before leaving after lunch on the Friday. As with the more standard playlist/blindfold groups, all meditation retreat participants will have a 1:1 video meeting before & after the retreat. There will also be access to a subsequent online integration group. Facilitation charges are less, as during the retreat we’ll be following more of a peer support structure. So overall charges are likely to be £500-700 (depending on income) plus bus travel from/to Amsterdam & truffle costs.

***applying for places:***  Although [*psychedelic truffles are comparatively safe*](http://goodmedicine.org.uk/stressedtozest/2019/01/recent-psychedelic-research-what-are-risks), it is important that they are used thoughtfully and for some people they won’t be appropriate. Typically, [*researchers screen out*](https://akademiai.com/doi/full/10.1556/2054.2019.026) people who have a personal or family history of bipolar or psychotic disorder and too some other psychological difficulties. Current use of antidepressants is also usually a contraindication. Because psilocybin produces a transient increase in blood pressure, studies typically screen out as well those with a history of coronary artery disease, cerebrovascular disease, poorly controlled hypertension and other unstable medical conditions.

Lower/medium/higher income bands follow the UK Psychedelic Society lead with students, unemployed & minimum wage earners with no savings qualifying for the lower band; a standard wage (which in London they suggest would be £24-35k per year) qualifying for the medium band; and those earning more than £35k annually or with other savings being asked to go for the higher band (which helps those on lower income bands and supports the education & outreach work of PHP Scotland).

If you would like to apply for one (or more) of these four retreats, please contact James. Once provisionally accepted, you will be asked to fill out a fairly detailed initial screening questionnaire and send in a non-returnable £25 to cover application processing costs and an annual membership of PHP Scotland – which gives you access to a WhatsApp group for regular updates on emerging research/other rele-vant news, a monthly online orientation/integration group, the quarterly *“Psyche-delic news’,* support for PHP Scotland’s education and outreach work, and the opportunity to apply for these experience retreats.

*To find out more or apply please email James Hawkins at jh.edinburgh@gmail.com.*