

# Fall 2009 Newsletter

**My Dear Sangha,**

I have just returned home from an amazing journey abroad.

Returning to my homeland to offer the gifts I have learned over the last 20 years here in America was especially precious to me.

And, after 20 years, I have just become an American citizen! I aced my test last Monday and I will be sworn in some time next month.

Some of the highlights of this trip were my visit to Grindelwald, a small city located high in the Swiss Alps where I met up with Jack Kornfield, my teacher. Having made some loose plans to go paragliding before the Vipassana retreat in Beatenberg started, everything came together and we spent a most marvelous day in each other's company. It was a beautiful day filled with hiking, eating fondue (only Americans eat fondue in the summer time), and flying through the skies together. During our flying adventure, we caught some amazing thermals (in paragliding speak that means columns of rising air). Spending almost an hour in the high up mountains, at some point I looked over to Jack and saw that he had caught a thermal and, literally, had his head in the clouds! My teacher with his head in the clouds - I laughed out loud.

Visiting my homeland with a foreign friend, I see things with different eyes. The familiar becomes special and I am able to appreciate everything anew. From that day with Jack, the theme of my trip was appreciation. It turned out to be a very appropriate theme, indeed.

The nine days spent teaching with Jack in Beatenberg was both wonderful and intense. Adjusting my skills as a yoga teacher to suit the silent tone of a Vipassana retreat proved to be a great learning experience, throughout which I felt touched by Jack's confidence in me. The yoga classes I offered were very simple and quiet. It was great to see the power of yoga once again.

The next event in my Europe schedule was teaching an Anusara Immersion in Zurich, and I attempted to do so, in German no less. On the third day I hit a wall and said to my students that I would never speak another word in German again! I think it was very daring to try to convey such a complex and sophisticated system in a language that I haven't really spoken in 20 years! Nevertheless we managed, in part be-

cause my assistant, Michael Thurnherr, a wonderful and mature teacher, helped out a lot. The immersion was packed and successful in that everyone moved through a week of personal transformation.

Following all of this good work, I enjoyed the pleasure of a 10-day vacation with my beloved friends Julia Butterfly, Alissa Hauser and Milena Fraccari. We traveled across Italy in a tightly packed car, from event to event. We had all been on the road for some time. Four girls and one car made for too much luggage. Every time we had to leave for a new destination, Julia chased us all away so she could get into the “zone” to pack the car. It was amazing that she managed to fit everything, including stuff that was given to us along the way.

I had an especially powerful time at a conscious community named Damanhur in northern Italy. I have never seen anything quite like the temples they constructed, by hand, into the heart of a mountain! For many years they built them in secret and once the authorities found out, they went there to shut them down. Instead, the Damanhurians invited the officials to view the temples who were so overwhelmed by their beauty that they couldn't destroy these works of greatness and, thus, promptly granted them a permit! It has been called the 'Eight Wonder of the World'. The official greeting of the Damanhurians is “Con te,” which means, “with you.”

In Florence I co-taught an event with Julia, which was organized by Damanhur. I know I will return to this industrious and sweet community very soon!

If you want to check it out, here is their website:

[www.damanhur.info](http://www.damanhur.info)

I wish you all a wonderful and blessed Fall.