

“Since ancient times, all wise cultures have known the value of retreat. Time in retreat allows us to step out of the complexity of our life, to listen deeply to our body, heart and mind. For 2,500 years, meditation retreats have been a central part of the Buddhist path of awakening” – [Spirit Rock Meditation Center](#).



In this issue, two Sangha members share the experiences they had during the Work Party Day at the Insight Retreat Center (IRC) in Scotts Valley (north of Santa Cruz) last month. The picture on the right is the meditation hall at the IRC.

IRC Work Day Experience – By Megan Hammer-Welsh

Walking up the drive to the colonial inspired facility, I was taken away by the crisp coastal breeze, the lush landscaping, and the view of the nearby redwoods. The center has the same charm as a bed-and-breakfast: immensely inviting, and conjures a desire to rest and revitalize. The help, the inhabitants, the facilitators, your "dharma friends" are all as extraordinarily welcoming as they are kind. Although it was my intention to work while visiting, I cannot deny my amazement over the serenity I experienced by merely being amongst fellow mindful people. Everybody was so cooperative, patient, kind, and tranquil, making it all more difficult to leave and go back to the world! The center accommodates forty people with private rooms and shared restrooms. The center has a beautiful meditation hall. The many windows allow for an abundance of sunlight as it does for a view of birds jumping amongst branches of the trees. And the most impressive element of this center is the heated cork floor for walking meditation. One won't easily experience discomfort over walking barefoot over these floors! Overall, it was a rewarding experience and I can't wait to go again.

IRC Work Day Experience – By Duane Retzloff

It was really a treat to drive to IRC with Jeff and Megan for this work retreat. I had already experienced the wonder of the retreat center, having gone on the first working retreat with Gil Fronsdal and I knew they were going to love the place. To me, it was like going back home to a special place where I had one of my most wonderful, meaningful retreats. Sure

enough, this experience validated my first impression and I met some of the same people I saw on my retreat. The atmosphere was still there. Coming there, you feel a wonderful spiritual awakening, and it is as if the whole place emotes that feeling, from the people working there, to the meditation hall, to the beautiful gardens and redwoods surrounding the place. When I first went to the retreat, I was so impressed how everyone worked together seamlessly to make everything come together in a natural flowing process. Again, working at the retreat was so special because of the people who organized it and coordinated the work. You felt their energy and their love and compassion for the place and it was so infectious that I felt that I was grateful for the opportunity to do work for the retreat center to make my contribution and leave my mark on the place. I highly recommend this retreat to anyone who has any interest at all in going on a retreat. This was definitely one of my best retreats and I have been to many, from the Goenka retreat in North Fork, to Spirit Rock in Marin County, to Hidden Villa in Los Altos. Also, it was my best, most rewarding work retreats.