EXPERIENCE PEACE IN NATURE

A nature walk for KFBG visitors to refresh one’s connection with nature, and explore inner peace
Nature’s peace manifests, and can be experienced, in many ways—the fragrance of a flower, the song of a bird, the gentle movement of a stream, the spectacular view from a mountain top. Intrinsic to nature are also the principles of balance and harmony; peace is an inherent quality of these principles and thus of the natural world. We human beings are also a part of this wonderful, multifaceted natural world and for this reason, peace is also within each one of us. We can learn from nature how to bring our body and mind back into a state of balance; this enables us to perceive life from the perspective of that natural state of peace which is within us.

In this booklet, seven practices are especially designed for you to practice in seven locations in the beautiful natural environment of the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG). These practices build on one another, yet they can also be practiced independently. Each practice has a specific focus, yet they share the same intention, which is for us to refresh our connection with the peace in nature and experience this peace in our own hearts.

KFBG is a secular nature conservation and education organisation. These practices are not intended to be, or feel, religious.

Please enjoy this journey of peace in nature and in you.
Notes to Booklet Users

For each practice a minimum of 15 minutes is recommended.

These seven practices can be undertaken as a complete series moving from locations 1 through to 7, or at selected locations, according to one’s time and preference. For details about the distance and elevation changes between locations, please see below.

Please bring a pen or pencil to record your experiences.

1. Engaging with Your Senses
2. Breathing with Your Tree
3. Connecting with the Earth
4. Reflecting on Your Discoveries
5. Experiencing Your Inner Stillness
6. Opening Your Heart
7. Offering Gratitude

To complete the whole loop will be fairly physical in natural surroundings, so please wear good footwear and bring enough water. The duration of the walk indicated above is for your reference only. The actual walk time depends on your pace.

Alternatively, you may purchase KFBG shuttle bus tickets and take a shuttle bus down from near Kwun Yum Shan Summit after completing your walk and practices.
“Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.”

– Lao Tzu
The Plants & Us Greenhouse, in the central Lower Area, is a space for active engagement with your senses. As you walk through the plants and flowers, all your senses can be stimulated, by the fragrance and unique texture of plants, the beauty of trees and flowers, the musical sounds from a plant that is connected to special equipment that can detect electrical resistance generated by the plant and then translate the changes in resistance, caused by the plant’s reaction to touch, water, your presence etc. into different melodies.
“Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better.”

– Albert Einstein
Actively engage your senses with the plants and flowers: their appearance, smells, and textures, and the sounds around you.

Identify something that captivates your interest, and then spend some time observing it. Notice how simply observing what captivates you can evoke the feeling of peace inside you.

Write about, or draw, on the opposite page.
What captivates my interest is ...
Walk up past the Art House into the middle of this lovely garden. This area is ideal for those who wish to experience the joy and magic of nature without too much physical effort. Here visitors can walk beside the stream amongst mature trees, alive with birds and insects.
“Nature loves to become aware of itself through you. When you become aware of how still trees are—deeply rooted in being, we could say the tree becomes aware of itself through you.”

– Eckhart Tolle
Sit quietly and be aware of your breathing as you observe your surroundings.

Identify a tree that you would like to connect with.

If the tree is safely accessible, go to the tree and greet it with your gentle touch on its trunk. If the tree is not physically accessible, greet the tree with your kind thoughts toward it.

Find a place to sit where you can easily see your tree.

Look at the tree with full attention until you can see it clearly in your mind even with your eyes closed.

With eyes closed, breathe in and out with the vision of the tree in your mind; then repeat silently, in your mind, “Breathe in, inhaling freshness from the tree; breathe out, offering my respect to the tree; I am breathing with the tree.” You may simplify the words as “breathe in, freshness; breathe out, respect”.

Write about, or draw, your tree on the opposite page.
My tree looks like this ...
This garden is set on three terraces beside the stream, near the Chicken Houses. You will find some unusual art here. The fish mosaic plays a part in our ‘Little Fish’ workshops. The Nature Trail (Butterfly Path) meanders on up from here through the forest to the Rainbow Pavilion and/or the Butterfly Garden.
“He who regards all things as one is a companion of Nature.”

– Chuang Tzu
Find a spot that allows you to see nearby hills.

Stand in a natural and upright posture and focus on the mountains; allow the qualities of the hills to inform your body (such as being grounded, solid and connected to the earth).

Breathe in and out, deep and long, three times, feeling the support from the earth through your feet.

You may close your eyes to fully feel this connection between your feet and the earth for a moment; then feel this connection gently moving upward and permeating your entire being.

When you feel your connection with the earth is solid, you could open your eyes and walk around the fish mosaic in a slow pace; continue feeling your connection with the earth through your feet. You may also repeat to yourself, “I am connecting with Mother Earth.”

Whether you will continue your journey up the mountain or return to the Lower Area, maintain your awareness of this connection with each step you take. You may only spend 10 minutes in this way, yet you may notice far more than you ever have on a walk before.

Write down your experience on the opposite page.
My experience is ...
Practice 4:
Reflecting on Your Discoveries

Butterfly Garden

The Butterfly Garden was created in a sheltered spot in the Middle Area, to attract some of Hong Kong’s more than 230 species of butterfly and over 1,100 species of moth found at KFBG. By planting the right nectar and larval food plants, we encourage a large variety of species to visit the garden all-year-round. There is plenty to discover here, and you may be able to connect with some awesome natural beauty.
“I do not know whether I was then a human dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a human.”

– Chuang Tzu
As you walk around the garden, discover 3 natural objects that draw your attention.

Write down or draw these 3 objects on the opposite page.

Find a comfortable place to sit down and reflect on this question: In what ways can these 3 objects be related to each other?

Write down your thoughts on the opposite page.

Then ask yourself: What are my own relationships with these 3 objects?

Write down your answer on the opposite page.

Then sit quietly for a moment with these relationships in mind, and see what feelings arise.
The 3 natural objects I’ve discovered are ...

These 3 objects can be related in these ways ...

My own relationships with these 3 objects are ...
Practice 5:
Experiencing Your Inner Stillness

Dragon Pavilion

Walk up on paths through Fern Walk and the Ilex Garden, or on the road, to Orchid Haven. The Dragon Pavilion in Orchid Haven is one of KFBG’s really special places, normally quiet and secluded among ferns, vines and trees. In summer heavy rain often transforms the waterfall and stream beside the pavilion into a cascading torrent of white water splashing over rocks and pools.
“Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.”

– Lao Tzu
As you arrive at the Dragon Pavilion, take a moment to carefully observe your surroundings.

Find a place to sit comfortably, with your spine elongated and shoulders relaxed.

Breathe in and out naturally with eyes closed. When breathing in, repeat in your mind, “nurturing”, and when breathing out, repeat “relaxing”.

After about 5 minutes of breathing in this way, bring your attention to the natural pause between the in-breaths and the out-breaths. This pause may be just a split second, yet it exists.

When you are ready to move on, gently bring your awareness back to your body and open your eyes.

Write down or draw your experience on the opposite page.
My experience is ...
Practice 6:
Opening Your Heart

Kadoorie Brothers Memorial Pavilion

After walking through the Moon Gate, you will find the Kadoorie Brothers Memorial Pavilion. This was built in 1997 to commemorate the founders of KFBG, Sir Horace and Lord Lawrence Kadoorie. The two roofs symbolise the strong connection between them. This place, a favourite of the brothers, offers panoramic views of KFBG and the north-western New Territories.
“The amount of happiness that you have depends on the amount of freedom you have in your heart.”

– Thich Nhat Hanh
Take some time to enjoy the breathtaking panoramic views. As you walk around the area, allow yourself to fully take in the beauty of the scenery.

Complete a circle on the path. Was there a spot where you felt a sense of joy, ease or freedom? If so, return to there.

No matter whether you choose to be in a sitting or standing position, gently stretch your body so that there is a sense of openness in your chest.

Now you may calmly gaze at the scene in front of you. As you inhale, repeat in your mind, “I breathe in the vastness from nature”; and as you exhale, repeat “I offer my love to nature”; or you may simplify the words as “Inhale, Vastness”, “Exhale, Love”. Enjoy this practice for as long as you wish.

Write down or draw your experience on the opposite page.
My experience is ...
At the gateway to the summit are the Dragon and Phoenix Pillars, symbolizing prosperity, longevity and harmony. The summit of Kwun Yum Shan is about 550 metres above sea level. From here, you can see out over much of the New Territories. Hidden among the trees at the summit are ancient altars where, in centuries past, farmers came to seek blessings from the goddess Kwun Yum for peace, fertility and bountiful harvests.
“Heaven, Earth, and I were produced together, and all things and I are one.”

– Chuang Tzu
Take some time to enjoy the views and the scene at the summit.

Find a place to sit or stand comfortably in front of a beautiful view of nature.

Think of something or someone that you feel grateful for and offer your gratitude toward that thing or that person, deep in your heart. Think of more things or people you can offer gratitude to. (Each time you offer your gratitude, you may want to close your eyes so that you can be more focused on offering your gratitude.)

When you’ve completed this practice, walk on the circular path around the hilltop, or the path inside the wood, in silence. This time, with each step you take, you could offer thanks to the Earth, and to Mother Nature, deep in your heart.

Write down or draw your experience on the opposite page.
My experience is ...
“Peace. It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.”
“When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moment, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace and love.”

– Thich Nhat Hanh
Review the exercises you have practiced throughout this booklet.

Identify the ones that you can incorporate into your daily life. For example, feeling the connection between your feet and the earth can be practiced wherever you are.

You could repeat those practices on a regular basis, even for just 5 minutes each time.

And of course, you are most welcome to visit the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden again to refresh your experiences with these practices. Nature will offer you a new sense of wonder in its different seasons.
“May your life be filled with peace and happiness!”

References: The exercises in this booklet are inspired by the mindfulness approach shared in Thich Nhat Hanh’s “A Handful of Quiet, Happiness in Four Pebbles” (published in 2012).