



BYRON BAY

NO. 1



GREETINGS AND LOVE FROM MELANIE.

Tuesday, December 15, 2009

The true practice of yoga began with the 13 hour flight from SFO to Sydney and then the 2 hour flight from Sydney to Brisbane and the 3 hour drive from Brisbane airport out to Byron Bay.

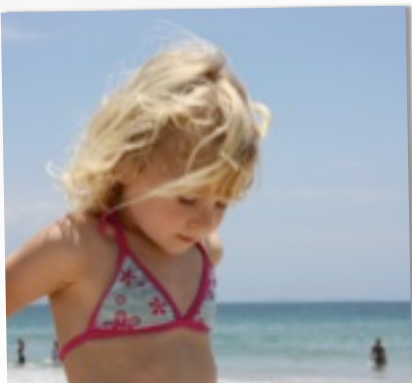
Sheesh did I have to put my best yogic self forward. Driving on the right side

of the car, on the left side of the road, with a map that made no sense, caused all of us to do a lot of deep breathing. Once we finally arrived at the house, we dropped from sheer exhaustion.

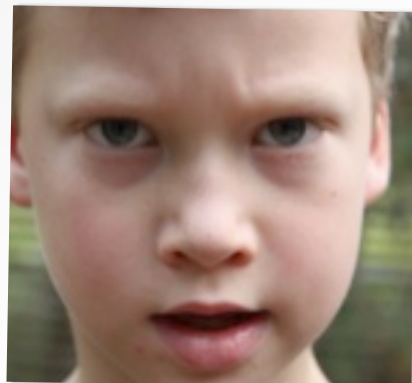
We began to explore Byron Bay on Sunday and soon fell in love. The

Australian people are some of the nicest I have ever encountered.

My yoga practice with Dena began yesterday morning. Another chance for my best yogic self. I arrived an hour late, not knowing that Byron Bay had a different time than Brisbane.



REN



NOAH



BACKYARD OF HOUSE

Ashtanga Yoga December 15, 2009 continued ...

As I was approaching the door, Dena walked out and said "I've been waiting for you." I then walked into the door, at what I thought was 6:30 am, and found it a little odd that everyone present was more than half way through their practice. I thought "Wow, these locals must wake up and begin practicing at 5:30 am." I began my practice and about half way through the sun salutations I realized my body felt like jelly and I was truly exhausted and jet-lagged.

Instead of listening inward, I promptly ignored the fatigue in my body and continued on. I finished the primary postures and then went into the second series right before bhakansana and then I stopped. I was shaking so much at that point and completely drenched in sweat. I still have so much to learn about slowing down and backing off; so much to learn. Tomorrow that is my intention: slow movements. slow breath. open mind. By this time, Dena was onto her own practice. All of the students had cleared out of the room. I had very little energy left to complete backbends and the finishing postures. I did my best, and then laid in svasana.

Within in a few moments I was on my mat in tears. Tears from the imperfectness I felt in my core. Tears from the opening in my heart. Tears from finally making it to this part of the earth. Tears from the last year of my life and all that has been unfolding. Tears from feeling like I had come home to myself in so many ways.

As I was leaving the yoga shala, I looked up and noticed that the clock said 9:20 am instead of 8:20 am. I

walked over to Dena and I said, "what time is it?" She said, "it's 9:20. You were an hour late. It's ok. Change your clock and come back tomorrow on time."

It was really that simple. I felt truly grateful in that moment. For the homecoming. For the simplicity. For the love.

Today's practice began on time with a thirty minute sit and Dena's insightful voice. She started the sit with the traditional closing prayer. After we chanted, she said "every ending is a beginning of more of the same or the beginning of something new." With that being said we started our practice. She practiced with us through the sun salutations and the standing postures. It was exactly what I needed and I felt so steady and strong in my body. The light to yesterday's darkness. Again, I felt truly grateful for this practice.

Over and over and over again I have moved through the sun salutations and the standing postures. Over and over and over again I have learned from them.

Lengthen the spine. Stay with the breath. Empower the legs. Stay with the feelings and not the thinking. Breathe in. Breathe out.

And so it went like that from asana to asana - fluidly and effortlessly. Because, sometimes this practice feels like we are flying free and sometimes it feels like we are sinking in the mud.

And then, Dena was helping me in karundasana. I have been working on this posture for 3 years. Let me say that again - I have been on this posture for T H R E E years.

Dena approached me and said,

"do you need help with this one?" I said, "uh, yeah." She said, "ok let me see what you got." I started laughing and said "ok." I went up into pincha - myurasana the preperation pose for karundasana. From there, I am to put my legs in lotus and lower my knees into my armpits while balancing on my forearms. I am to keep my butt off the ground and then get my legs back up before lowering into chaturanga. For three years I try to go up into lotus and fall. I go up into lotus and fall. I go up into lotus and fall ...

Dena asked if I could lower myself and keep my butt off the ground. I laughed again and said, "uh, no." She then helped me through it the first time with her hands on me. She then said, "ok, imagine you have a baby in your arms and it is small and slippery. You can't drop it. If your butt hits the ground, then you've dropped the baby. Don't drop the baby." "Ok," I replied.

I kept repeating that mantra in my head as I took my legs upward. Dena helped me balance and then I began lowering my lotus legs with knees into my armpits. She moved her hands from my hips and counted one breath and then my butt hit the ground. I dropped the baby. She said, "again." And again the same thing happened. Then she said, "Mel, it is not that you can't do this. It is that you haven't done this yet. Today is the day. Don't drop the baby." Again, I took my legs upward, put my legs into lotus position and lowered my knees into my armpits. Dena moved her hands away from my hips and began counting: One, two, three, four, five. Today was the day I would keep hold of that small slippery baby. Om. Shanti.