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PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIE WILLIAMS



# time out

## HIGHLAND LAKE INN YOGA STUDIO

A restorative yoga weekend at the Highland Lake Inn in Flat Rock brings a writer closer to everyday serenity.

Written by *Rosie Molinary*



Recently, I opened the pantry and saw the milk I had used that morning sitting there. I squinted, like I was looking at one of those pictures asking the viewer to name what was out of place. I walked over to the refrigerator. There, I found my box of cereal.

I've been mixing things up lately — saving a document file in a folder it has nothing to do with, putting two contact lenses into the same eye. I'm no perfectionist, but I would like to return to the state where I only have to do something once, where I make decisions, even when I am exhausted, that I can count on later. Can't I just get that reliable woman back?

I'm convinced that going away is the answer, so I book a few days at the Highland Lake Inn in gorgeous Flat Rock. I adhere to this logic until it is time to pack, and then the chatter in my brain tells me I have no business

going anywhere with the work I have to do. I reason. I plead. I sulk. But I go anyway.

### CHANGE OF STATE

The road to Flat Rock is lush with vibrant trees and rolling vistas. I turn the cell phone off and refuse the urge to make lists in my head.

When I arrive at the inn, I am charmed by the wooden cabins and the campus spread across 26 acres that seems like a summer camp. My room in the Woodward House, a Victorian-style building whose setup is like a bed and breakfast, is ample and calming. A fireplace sits next to a whirlpool tub, inviting a warm bath. A king bed beckons me to lie down. I do neither. I turn on my computer and try to log on. It doesn't work. I empty my bag — I have work to do while I am here. The clock approaches 10:30 a.m. I have an appointment at the on-site yoga studio run by Fred Brown.

The Yoga Studio at Highland Lake is small and inviting. Brown greets me for our private session, something available to any inn guest, with a good cheer and earnestness that is soothing. I am a lapsed yogi, eager to find my way back into practice. Around the studio, yoga props await my use. I start at the back bender, a wooden device that is shaped like a humpback whale. Sitting down in it, I breathe and then slowly start working my back over the humpback's arch. My ribs stretch; my vertebrae unlock. I savor the feeling of stretching out a back that spends most of its time hunched over a keyboard.

Next, I work my way through gravity swings where I hang upside-down, open my chest, and do a headstand with no stress. I feel tall and long, ballerina-like, as I bend to acknowledge Brown with a traditional "Namaste."

1. Guest rooms include deep soaking tubs.
2. An on-site lake offers a place for reflection.
3. Yoga instruction begins in The Old Barn.
4. Meals include a daily Southern breakfast buffet.
5. Instructor Fred Brown settles in to a *Virasana*.

  
YOGA



In the yoga studio, gravity swings help students go through the motions with low body stress.

**IN THE MOMENT**

I follow yoga with lunch at Seasons Restaurant, where many menu ingredients come from the inn's two-acre organic garden. I savor the freshness of pasta topped in a garlic-Chablis reduction with zucchini, squash, and peppers before indulging in an apple tart with a rum-raisin sauce I try not to lick off the plate.

Back in my room, my brain is gravitating towards work. But it is exhausted, too, and so I opt for escape with an in-room massage. Later, I walk the grounds, finding my way to a bench that overlooks the lake. I stare off in the distance, relishing the birdsong. That evening, I do more yoga on my own. I take my time readying for bed

before finally pushing the untouched work off the bed. A touch of guilt comes over me as I drift off to the accompaniment of falling rain on the roof.

In the morning, I step out of bed — and feel my back groan. There is no mistaking the pain.

Practicing yoga vigorously twice in one day was too much for the lapsed yogi in me. I sit for a moment, my mind telling me that I can now make up for all the work that I didn't get done the night before. But then something happens: I turn the voice off and prepare

for a decadent breakfast buffet at Seasons, followed by pleasure reading outside in a rocking chair.

Back home, I figure that the emails I missed will overwhelm me and that I will stay up late to make up for lost time. Neither happens. In fact, for the following week, I go to bed earlier than I have in months. The mistakes stop. I return to yoga without the desire to get it all right the first time.

An ease sets in, and I realize that all the reliable woman in me needed was a couple days away to be anything but that. □

**Highland Lake Inn**

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(828) 693-6812 • (800) 762-1376  
[www.hlinn.com](http://www.hlinn.com)

**WANT TO PLAN YOUR OWN YOGA RETREAT?**

**Charlotte Yoga** offers several workshop weekends. This year's calendar includes a Progressive Power weekend, a Power Yoga weekend, and an Iyengar weekend, providing options for yogis at all skill levels. Sessions vary from nine hours to more than 12 over a weekend, and registration ranges from \$150-\$250.

[www.southerndharma.org](http://www.southerndharma.org)

**Lighten Up Yoga** offers an annual equinox retreat. This year's retreat will take place in late September at Seven Springs Center in Waynesville. \$265 provides double lodging and vegetarian meals for the weekend. Plans include exploring how alignment, self-awareness, kindness, and passion can broaden the scope of yoga practice

[www.lightenupyoga.com](http://www.lightenupyoga.com)

**The Dharma Yoga Shala** in Raleigh offers monthly intensives: three-hour yoga seminars on varied topics. Periodic Yogafests, an intensive day of yoga that benefits a local nonprofit, offer several yoga classes throughout that day. Prices range from \$50 to \$240 for the intensive workshops and retreats, and the Yogafest operates off of donations.

[www.mindspring.com/~ncschoolofyoga](http://www.mindspring.com/~ncschoolofyoga)