Educational project

Rigpé Yeshé

Programme for children and teenagers
Organisers Name and Address:
Association Rigpé Yeshé
4 rue Mirande, 34700 Fozières

Location of premises
Rigpé Yeshé site at the entrance of Lerab Ling
L’Engayresque
34650 Roqueredonde

Project written on
25th of March 2016
## Contents

1. The legal status and vocation of the organisers
2. The educational objectives of the organisers
3. How we ensure the smooth running of the programme
The legal status and the vocation of the organiser

The Association of type law 1901 ‘Rigpé Yeshé’ was founded in Fozières in 2005 by parents and educators with the following objectives:

• to develop and hold programmes for children and teenagers to help them cultivate universal human values and explore questions about the world including interdependence and interconnectedness

• to offer tools for cultivating mindfulness, meditation, awareness and compassion

• to create the conditions for children and teenagers to develop genuine self-worth and to form meaningful and positive connections with others, based on a sincere wish for their well-being and happiness

Our programme is inspired by the Buddhist tradition; activities are held on the site of Lerab Ling, a Buddhist religious congregation recognised by government decree.

The aim of Rigpé Yeshé is to organise programmes for children and teenagers in Lerab Ling mainly during the summer period. The programmes are offered in a safe environment that encourages each person to flourish while maintaining values of tolerance, altruism and openness towards the world at large.
Public welcomed
The children and teenagers we welcome are from all nationalities ranging in age 6 to 18 years old.

All are welcome, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, social or religious origins. While their parents follow the programmes proposed by Lerab Ling, the young people can be registered on the Rigpé Yeshé programme: however their participation is optional.

The main programme takes place during the summer holidays and is non-residential. Parents drop their children off in the morning and collect them in the evening.

The environment
The natural environment of Lerab Ling offers a space of both freedom and protection. At 800 metres above sea level, situated on the Escandorgue plateau, on the edge of the Larzac, the vast domain of 160 hectares is a private ground that includes woods, meadows and gardens as well as accommodation and various structures all nestled in the landscape.
The educational objectives of the organisers

A. OBJECTIVES AND VALUES

Rigpé Yeshé proposes to help children and teenagers cultivate inner values such as altruism, compassion and contentment, which will allow them to have a meaningful life, to be independent, and to make responsible choices.

Of course we are not trying to replace the education that happens within the family and at school. Rather, we aim for young people to benefit from their holiday time, enjoy an inspiring environment and return home with positive memories in their heart.

Our objective is to encourage young people to flourish on a physical, emotional and intellectual level and develop their creativity as well as their ethical and spiritual values.

Our programmes include various playful and creative activities which are offered in a safe environment and are adapted to different age groups.

Our programme has three educational objectives:

- Connecting to yourself: knowing and understanding oneself
- Connecting to others: cultivating empathy and compassion
- Connecting to the world: acting with altruism
a. Connecting to yourself: knowing and understanding oneself

Knowing and understanding yourself better is our first educational objective. We introduce tools for cultivating mindfulness and awareness that enable young people to connect with the best in themselves, their inner goodness. The methods used are often playful and always adapted to the different age groups.

Even over the relatively short holiday period, several benefits related to the child’s personal development can be observed:

- a greater awareness of body, thoughts, feelings and emotions
- an improved ability to concentrate and be attentive
- greater self-confidence in everyday life
- a reduction of stress and anxiety, which often adversely affect children’s behaviour in school and at home.

Cultivating mindfulness and awareness allows children not only to be a good friend to themselves, but also to others.

We make the conscious choice, instant after instant, to be fully there. To be fully present to our mind and our body in the present moment is a way of being tender with ourselves, with others and the world. This quality of attention is inherent in the capacity we have to love.

– Pema Chödrön
b. Connecting to others: cultivating empathy and compassion

Our second educational objective is the development of concern for others, through training in empathy and compassion.

This includes children:

• becoming more in touch and at ease with themselves in order to be more in harmony with others, to establish true communication and real friendship with others

• knowing how to take care of others, cultivating understanding and openness to others

• cultivating the best of ourselves as well as respect for all living beings.

Being present in the world: acting with altruism

Our third objective is to encourage children to act with altruism and explore the principles of interdependence and interconnectedness with other people. This exploration opens up the relationships we have with others and with the world we live in.

The young people we welcome to our programmes come from various cultural backgrounds and countries. This offers a unique opportunity for exchange and learning, to allow children to encounter differences in cultural norms, while at the same time recognising the common humanity of all.

The aim is to:

• learn how to live together in a spirit of tolerance, respect and solidarity

• encourage peace and dialogue, and to become familiar with the principles of non-violence and peaceful conflict resolution

As much as possible, be kind. And it’s always possible
– His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Be the change you want to see in the world
– Mahatma Gandhi
• become more aware of the impact of our actions on the environment and to feel a greater sense of responsibility towards the planet

The Heart of the Rigpé Yeshé Programme

The association Rigpé Yeshé is inspired by the universal and ethical values of the Buddhist tradition. This tradition reminds us that all of us have goodness and wisdom within, even though we may have difficulties showing these qualities.

Our wish is to offer young people tools to understand themselves better, to discover and confidently connect with their own inner resources, and to become true ‘servants of peace’ in all aspects of their lives.

Although each one of us is unique and different, we share a common humanity. It is this universal approach that Rigpé Yeshé would like to offer to young people and inspire them to explore this universal dimension of their relationship to others and to the world.

Rigpé Yeshé strongly supports the universal ethical and spiritual values that are the basis of all the world’s great faiths and spiritual traditions.

Connecting with others, and the importance of dialogue—between members of different faiths, as well as atheists and agnostics—is for us a key factor contributing to a more peaceful world.
B. THE PROGRAMME

It is our heartfelt wish to create a programme which includes activities, games and exchanges. Our aim is to offer children and teenagers a programme, including activities, games and various exchanges, that is varied and that concretely answers young people's needs and allows them to have a rich and transformative experience.

The Four Age Groups
To take into account differences in age and maturity, and to adapt to children’s different capacities, our programmes are offered to four age groups, between 6 and 18 years, with each group having a main pedagogical theme.

Co-education is an important element of our programme and allows interactions between girls and boys.

The Four Age Groups
- the ‘Tigers’ 6–7 years old
- the ‘Dragons’ 8–10 years old
- the ‘Eagles’ 12–13 years old
- Teenagers 14–18 years old

We also organise workshops which bring all age groups together. This facilitates the development of openness to each other and the sharing of knowledge.

The international aspect of our programme
During our summer programmes, we welcome children of all nationalities. The international and multicultural nature of our programmes brings openness towards cultural diversity and at the same time a deep appreciation of our common humanity.
The structure of the programme
The programme is based on three main elements:

A – Spiritual time : ‘Dharm
B – Expression and creativity time
C – Outdoor activities and free-play

A – Spiritual time : ‘Dharm

Dharma is a Sanskrit word, the ancient language of India that – in a Buddhist context - refers to the teachings of the Buddha. In a more general sense it also means ‘spiritual path’, ‘spirituality’, and ‘truth’. It is this universal approach which Rigpé Yeshé emphasises.

Children who wish to are invited to start their day with a moment of mindfulness and reflection. For this, children are invited into the beautiful atmosphere of the Lerab Ling temple.

In a quiet and relaxed atmosphere, children and teenagers have the opportunity to connect with themselves. Various exercises of mindfulness and awareness are proposed, as well as practices of compassion, based on the Buddhist tradition.

Presentation of the Theme of the Day
Each day has a theme which relates to the typical daily life situation of a young person. Essential values such as compassion and wisdom are illustrated through short films, videos, role play, theatre, stories and songs.

A good head and a good heart always make a formidable combination.
– Nelson Mandela
Forums for reflection and discussion
Debate and other interactive exercises allow everybody to become familiar with the theme of the day. The young people reflect on the theme and everybody is encouraged to share their personal experience and understanding. Everyone is given the opportunity to express themselves if they wish.

Discovering Buddhism
Some young people are curious to discover and explore Buddhism, whether they are atheist, already familiar with Buddhism, or of another faith. Through exchange and dialogue, we offer them the opportunity to explore and understand the great values of this tradition, such as the law of cause and effect and interconnectedness.

Depending on the Lerab Ling programmes, those who wish can chose to attend a talk or participate in more traditional ceremonies.

For the teenagers: Investigation of fundamental questions
During workshops teenagers are offered opportunities to investigate the fundamental questions they have in their lives. They reflect on and investigate certain topics described in extracts of traditional Buddhist texts. Teenagers also learn about the latest scientific research on meditation and compassion, and the effect of meditation and compassion on the human brain. This ‘spiritual time’ is optional for all age groups. Those who don’t wish to be a part of this short morning session participate in other activities led by a Rigpé Yeshé holder.
**B – EXPRESSION AND CREATIVITY TIME**

Expressive and creative projects are offered to all age groups and allow children and teenagers to integrate mindfulness and awareness into their actions. Young people can choose between different workshops:

- Meditative arts: calligraphy, tea ceremony, the Japanese art of flower arrangement (*ikebana*)

- Traditional Creative arts and contemporary visual arts: painting, drawing, sculpture; film making and photography

- Creative writing, short stories and poetry

- Expressive arts: dance, song, theatre, role play, Japanese drums

We do not aim to distract or entertain children through these activities, as distraction already plays a big role in their daily life. Our wish is instead to offer them opportunities for bringing mindfulness and awareness into their ‘activity’, so that they can get in touch with their inner being in a joyful and lively way.

Doing projects together as a group, the children also learn to be more aware of the social dimension of their actions, for example, by designing and making objects for the benefit of poor children in India, etc.
C – OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AND FREE PLAY

Lerab Ling gives children the opportunity to benefit from a magnificent natural environment of woods, forests and meadows.

We benefit from a privileged geographical location, at moderate altitude on the edge of the Larzac Plateau, one hour’s drive from the Mediterranean sea in the south and the Cevennes to the east. Outings, hiking, horseback riding and swimming create a variety of ways in which children can discover a natural environment and to become aware of the deep link to nature all humans share. One of our main educational aims is to help young people understand the need to protect our planet.

Furthermore, by offering them a break without mobile phones, tablets and computers, we also hope to give them a fresh perspective, showing them how precious it is to be in touch with nature.

We also organize many outdoor team games and sports, like football. The children also have time for free play, simply to have fun with each other and to form and refresh meaningful and lasting friendships.
C. THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM

A solid team of experienced and qualified (BAFA/BAFD) holders is always available and attentive to ensure the children’s safety and well being. This team responds to each child’s questions, fears, needs and wishes.

An educational outline is prepared for each programme we offer. The role of the holder is crucial in adapting the programmes to the children, taking into consideration their age, how many of them there are, the boy/girl mix, their nationalities and their talents, so that each individual can benefit fully.

The particular qualities of each team member — some might be good in storytelling, others in sports, theatre or music etc.— also allows us to adjust the programme to the needs of the young people in the best possible way.

And finally, the Rigpé Yeshé holders are the key factor in creating an atmosphere of trust and security. This enriches the holiday time of children and teenagers with meaning and lasting significance: a time when horizons are opened up, connecting everyone with their heart and mind and with the world around them.

Growing up isn’t about finding new treasures but rather about discovering what we already have within

– Alexandre Jollien

David Rycroft
President of the association