

# Circle of Missé

Imagine a place where you can immerse yourself in activities that pleasure the soul. Imagine looking out of the window and seeing a lone pilgrim and his donkey pass by your window and stopping to ask for food, which is always provided. Imagine fields thick with sunflowers and butterflies, engulfing an outdated tractor. Imagine pleasing yourself. Imagine the Circle of Missé.

Located in the southernmost reaches of the Loire Valley, this rambling 19th century house is embraced by the river Thouet's oxbow. Bought by Aaron Tighe twenty years ago, he used it as a professional musician as a bolt hole to practice before concert performances, often for weeks at a time, totally undisturbed. Co-founder Wayne Milstead soon came to write amid the stark silence and peaceful environs too.

Friends followed, finding the same succour that the house offered, leaving only when fully restored. Whatever the need, the Circle of Missé always provided. Gradually the community flourished, as did the organic garden that is the constant source of so much food eaten there. Preserves, fruit and vegetables and free range eggs are combined into home baked cakes, and sustaining meals to chew over the days' events and the sharing of experiences.

Participants are guided through writing, painting or cooking. At the same time they are enveloped in a sense of a retreat that this alternative ambience offers. Some courses are dedicated to one pursuit, while the creativity weekends offer a choice between all three, with diverse workshops spread over each day. There is no advance selection, you can decide what to do, as your instincts dictate. Rest

assured that there will be no pressure, no performance, no preoccupation. There is no whiteboard, no Power Point, no lectern.

Souls gather in the library or the garden and are gently given a modest sheet of paper with a proposed theme for the session. Events are limited to six people, allowing space to breathe and connect. Time is dedicated to individual tutorial where developing creativity is encouraged, and inhibitions exempt from the lexicon of conversation. Sharing work and ideas is not mandatory. There is total abstinence from judgement, and negativity stays at the front gate.

External influences are drawn in to augment and inspire. A walk to the ancient dolmens at Taizé, a visit to the local farmer's market, eating at a local restaurant, wine tasting along the Loire, and sessions conducted in the historic town of Chinon, home of the great poet Rabelais, all offering unrivalled memory snapshots to treasure.

It is hard to believe that an hour's plane journey from London could possibly catapult anyone into a different world, unless of course it's true. The Circle of Missé does exactly that - unleashing the muse within and allowing us to simply be.



## Reader Offer

Book one place on a **Weekend Creativity Course** and bring a friend for just £99

The offer includes all food, wine, three-nights hotel, transport between Tours and Missé, any admissions fees to attractions and course tuition, except return travel to Tours. Prices start at £295.

Course run between October 1-4, 8-12, 22-25, and recommence in Spring 2011. Please visit [www.circleofmisse.com](http://www.circleofmisse.com) for more information.