

# The Inca Trail

by Suellen Raven

**A group of Journey Therapists and friends  
make a charity trek to Machu Picchu**



*Suellen Raven was so impressed by Brandon Bays' Journey Therapy workshop that she became an accredited therapist and holds her practice at her home near Hampton Court.*

*She is also a freelance writer and photographer and has lived in such diverse locations as Borneo, Belize, Hong Kong and The Falkland Islands.*

**M**OISTURE CLUNG TO OUR clothes and hair in droplets as we waited for dawn. The haunting sound of panpipes drifted up from the valley far below. Groups of people were gathering to celebrate the winter solstice in Peru's sacred site of Machu Picchu but, at 4.30 in the morning, as we stumbled along by torchlight towards the Sun Gate, mist envelopped us. What should have been visual heaven in mystical surroundings was denied us.

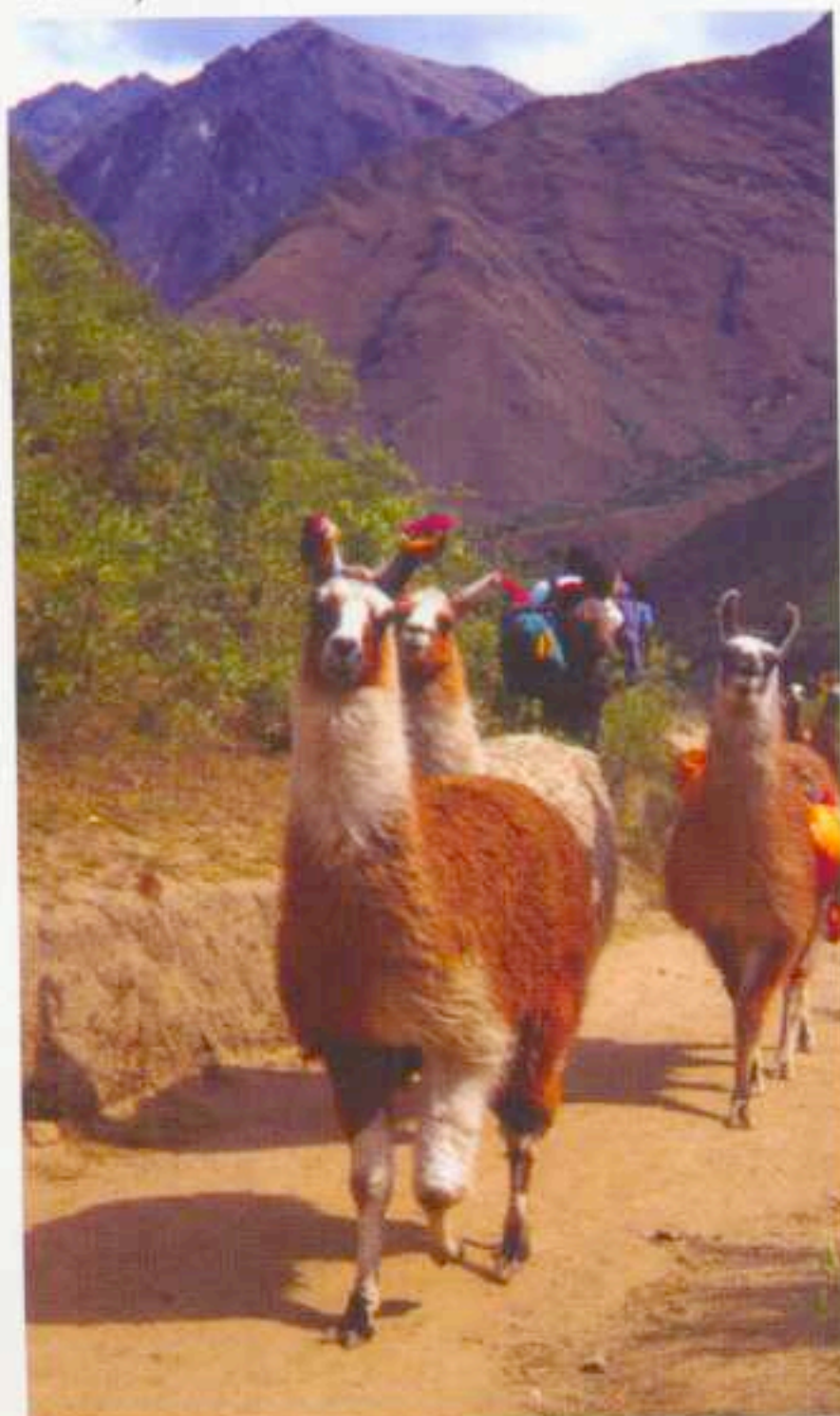
Nine of us, combining a love of adventure with the desire to help others were being sponsored to trek the Inca Trail. Our aim was to raise at least £10,000 for the children of Sierra Leone, orphans and victims of the country's civil unrest. We succeeded in raising nearly £20,000 thanks to the extraordinary efforts of some and the extra donations from those who had initially planned to do the trek.





The powerful and hauntingly beautiful ruins of Machu Picchu, female energy centre of the earth

June was the date chosen by trek organiser Bella-Marie Daniels. She timed things so that we would arrive at Machu Picchu, the female energy centre of the earth, for winter solstice. Bella initially asked a number of journey therapists to take part, but some people had to drop out so friends and partners asked if they could join in.



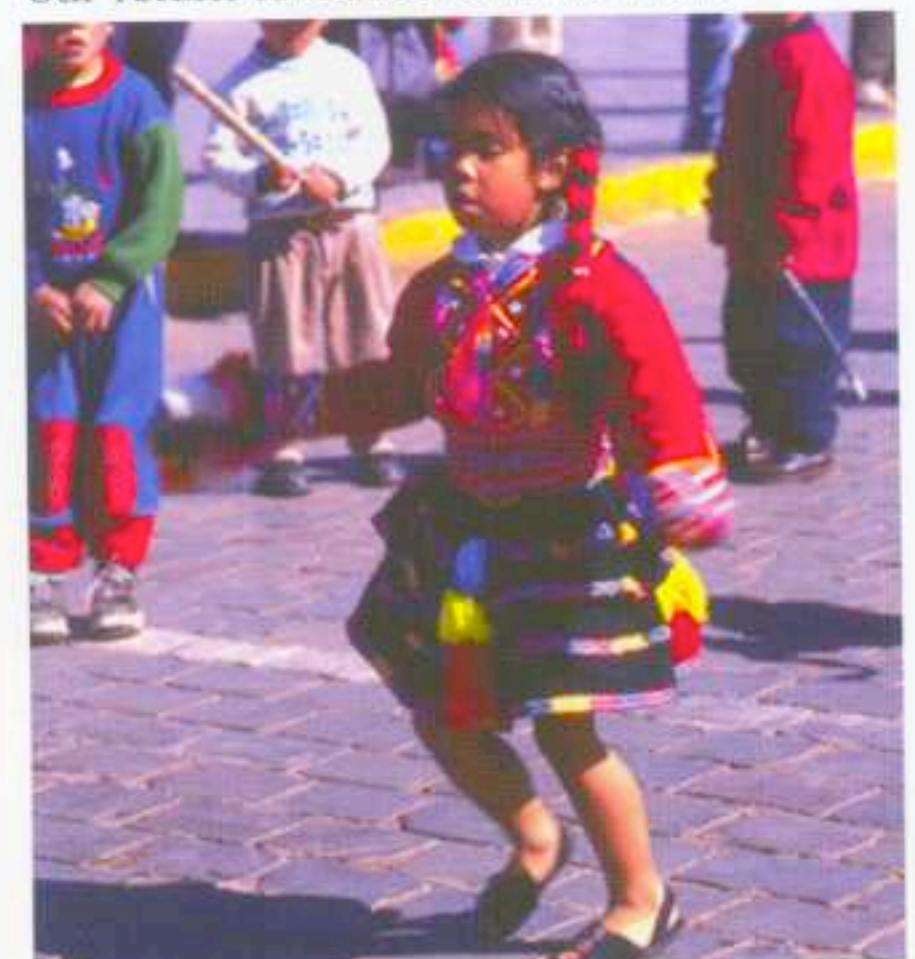
Llamas on the Inca Trail

Our excitement as we checked in at Heathrow Airport was dampened by an unpleasant surprise. A distraught Bella handed us tickets and T-shirts and broke the sad news that she wouldn't be travelling with us. Months of hard work spent organising the trip were blown away when her childminder let her down at the last minute.

Although many of us were strangers at the outset, a computer couldn't have selected a group of more compatible individuals. The support and encouragement we shared together helped each of us reach beyond our limitations which ranged from the physical to the psychological. Fiona suffered from vertigo. Suzy has a plastic hip and hoped she would cope with the gruelling terrain. My husband Dave and I, the oldest, feared we might hold the others back. Our trek would take us to the heady heights of 4,400 metres and the effects of altitude sickness lurked at the backs of all our minds!

As our plane neared Cuzco, capital of the fabled Inca Empire, we enjoyed breathtaking views of the Andes, blanketed in snow against a vivid blue sky. On touchdown, the thin air at 3,350 metres also took our breath away. I felt the beginnings of a niggling headache and my chest felt tight, but the exhilaration of being in such a beautiful city dulled the discomfort.

Cuzco, we discovered, was preparing to celebrate Inty Raymi, The Great Festival of the Sun. Its picturesque plaza teemed with colourful groups rehearsing for the parade. Cuzco comes alive on June 24 each year with colourful pageants, and we were delighted to experience this ancient ritual celebrating Inty Raymi on our return to Cuzco after the trek.



Rehearsing a dance routine in Cuzco square

Our hotel, a converted monastery, was a wonderful place in which to unwind. On arrival we were offered coca tea in the monastery's ornate chapel to help combat altitude sickness. The sounds of cascading water from a fountain in the inner courtyard soothed us after our long journey. During the two days before we started our trek we acclimatized to the



altitude, blazing a trail of sightseeing tours around Cuzco and its massive Inca fortress of Sacsayhuaman, exploring the ruins of Ollantaytambo in the Sacred Valley, and visiting the colourful markets of Chinchero and Pisac.

On June 18 we began a gentle ascent of the Inca Trail near Chilca. Below, meandering through the valley, snaked the Machu Picchu train taking the strain for the fainthearted and those in a hurry. Our trail was flat by Peruvian standards, but we steadily gained height and were glad to catch our breath during a break at Wayla Bamba. Soon we were reaching for hats and sunblock and were glad to bathe our feet in a nearby stream.



Peruvian woman at the roadside

At one point we had to step quickly aside when some llamas clattered past us. The temperature rose rapidly and the trail climbed ever more steeply before we stopped for a swig of water. A Peruvian family who lived in a tiny shelter close by, invited us in to try some home brewed beer. It looked like soapsuds and tasted like a mixture of cider and beer with a strong yeasty flavour. Dave, Ivan and I liked it, but the others weren't convinced. Suzy gave the huge cauldron of liquid a stir, while our guide described to us what the family lived on. We noticed a few guinea pigs scampering around, a delicacy that features on many restaurant menus.

After lunch the trail seemed endless and our guide, Cesar, used his considerable skills to persuade us to go further than originally planned. "Just another fifteen-minutes" he promised but, as Claire suspected, Cesar's fifteen-minutes stretched to an hour. We reached camp just before dark and were grateful for fresh popcorn and cups of hot chocolate, laced with brandy, before supper. The temperature, which had been over 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the day,

dropped to well below freezing but, despite the cold, we gathered outside our tents to admire a scintillating night sky.

Our meals were delicious, served in a small dining tent on a metre-square table. We all perched on little folding stools. There were wonderful soups, local grains like quinoa, and some of the hundreds of varieties of local potatoes. The cook even catered for Nathalie's vegetarian requirements. It wasn't just our increased appetites that made the simple food so tasty and satisfying.

By 9.00 pm we'd crawled into our tents and the silence of the mountains closed in, broken by muffled laughter, not least when one of the team needed the toilet tent only to find it had been moved.

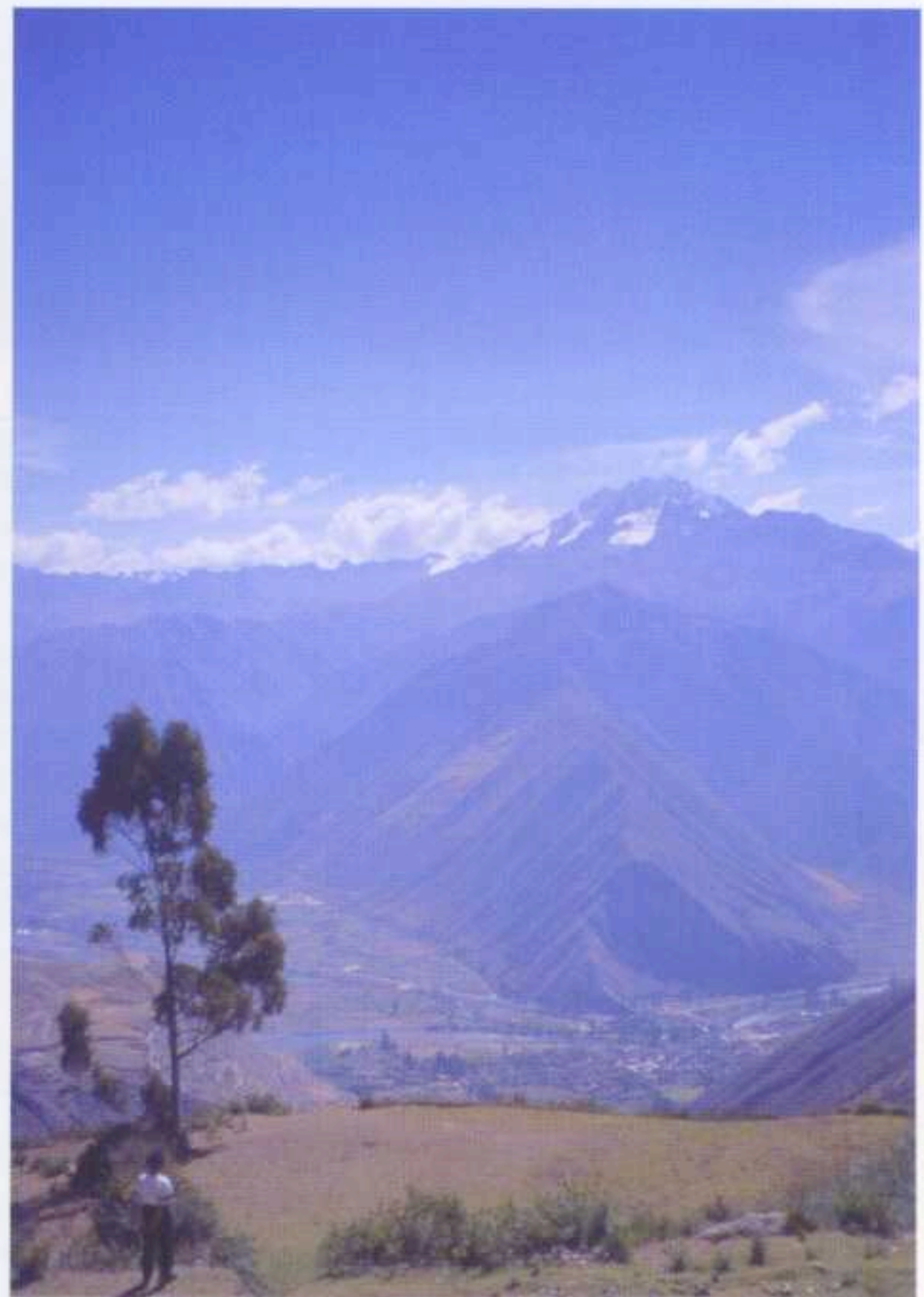
Day two was the killer, a climb to 4,400 metres to the aptly named *Dead Woman's Pass*. The five-hour ascent tested most of us to the limits. The higher we climbed, the slower we got, and the harder it was for us to breathe. For the last few hundred meters we were resting 50 seconds in every minute to get sufficient oxygen. Suzy was really suffering but her tears gave way to elation at the summit. Our descent to 3,800 metres on the other side of the pass was a little less demanding. We stopped for lunch at Pacaymayu, a huge campsite that Fiona likened to a Butlin's resort. Most of us sprawled-out on the ground on arrival and there was some muttering when Cesar suggested that we move on after lunch, climbing higher to a tiny tranquil site beside a lake. Any grumbling was silenced when we reached the top in time to see the sun's dying rays stain the highest peaks amber, while wispy white clouds floated across the darkening mountains beneath.

At 6.00 am on day three we climbed to 3,950 metres in breathtaking scenery, paused to enjoy the panoramic views then



Suzy with an Inty Raymi reveller

made a steep descent to the Inca ruins at Sayaqmarka, before dropping down to the valley floor at Conchamarca. After a break, we climbed again to 3,600 metres, via the Inca tunnel that has been carved through granite. We lunched overlooking the beautiful ruins of Phuyu Pata Marka and, to our delight, a condor spiralled into view, gliding across the valley for several minutes. It was the first condor Cesar had seen on the trail and we experienced a quiet joy at its appearance. Weary but elated, we began the final descent to Winaywayna struggling down 5,000 bone-crunchingly uneven steps. The promise of hot showers and cold beer spurred us on, so there was dissension when Cesar told us the campsite was full. Our only option was to climb to the ruins of Intipata where Cesar tried to restore humour by sending a porter to fetch some cold beers.



Beauty in the Sacred Valley



Day four began at 3.15 for a 4.30 am departure by torchlight to Machu Picchu's Sun Gate. The going was tough and our spirits were dampened by a change in the weather. Cloud and mist obscured the dawn – and everything else. Cesar led us down to a less crowded spot overlooking the ruins, and we paused for a while to watch a small group of hippies celebrating the winter solstice. Occasionally the mist thinned sufficiently for us to guess at the outline of part of the ruins, and Cesar filled in the blanks by holding up a postcard of Machu Picchu. After several more hours the mist lifted enough for us to explore the spectacular ruins. Machu Picchu was worth every painful step of the Inca Trail.

As a thank you to our guides, we invited them to lunch in the delightful railroad town of Aguas Calientes. Euphoria at having completed the trail, combined with the pisco sours consumed

over lunch, turned the event into a party. Our porters joined us for a beer or three while Ivan, Nathalie and Sharon bought for Britain from the itinerant traders. That night, nine very tired trekkers enjoyed the luxury of hot water and comfortable beds.

The following day the weather faired up and some of us returned to Machu Picchu for a visual feast. Not only were the views magnificent but we were also blessed by the appearance of another condor. We boarded the train back to Cuzco at 4.00 pm and arrived during a stunning firework display to mark the start of Inty Raymi.

Our Journey to and through Peru was filled with fun and laughter as we shared both joys and hardships along the way. We all fell in love with Peru and its people and a special friendship developed as we supported each other during our highs and lows. ♦

*Photography by Suellen Raven*



End of trek group photo



**Sunnyside Up Charity Trek**

*A video produced by Raven's Eye  
Reviewed by Shirley Brooker. Fellow NFSH.  
Price : £9.99 (plus £1.50 p&p)*

For those who have been to Peru and walked the Inca Trail this will bring back memories of that amazing area, the fabulous scenery and the exhausting climb to see it! For those who have not yet visited, it is a taster of what there is to experience.

The video was made by Dave and Suellen Raven and a group of people who chose to raise money for charity by undertaking this gruelling four-walking-days' hike. It follows them as they climb higher and higher from Cusco and then gradually descend down the steep incline back to Machu Picchu. They reported that it became a journey of inner personal discovery.

**All profits from the video will be given to charity.  
Contact Dave Raven on: 020 8783 0994  
or email: [info@thejourneytherapy.com](mailto:info@thejourneytherapy.com)**

**JOURNEY THERAPY**

Journey therapy is a unique and simple healing process that helps people to experience profound emotional and physical healing at a cellular level. Dr. Deepak Chopra, in his book *Quantum Healing*, suggests that trauma and suppressed negative emotions are often stored in our cells as 'phantom memories'. He believes these cellular memories act subtly over time and can cause disease and illness years after they have been put in place.

Brandon Bays pioneered her groundbreaking healing process following diagnosis of a large tumour in her uterus. As someone who lives the healthy life-style she promotes, Brandon was devastated and shocked at how disease could strike down someone who was doing 'everything right'.

"The tumour forced me to go beyond everything I had learned in the alternative field" Brandon recalls. She was driven to look beneath the surface for something deeper. When Brandon underwent a profound process of introspection she discovered an unresolved traumatic childhood memory stored inside the tumour. "I was able to finally face, resolve, forgive and complete that old issue. When it was complete my body went about the natural process of healing on its own", she says. What Brandon discovered was how to access the phantom memory stored in her body cells and, most importantly, how to resolve and release it. She called this process 'The Journey'.

Journey therapy frees us from any blocks that limit our potential. The process reunites us with our inner wisdom as we release old emotional wounds, self-sabotaging behaviour and ill health. We become empowered to take charge of our own destinies instead of cruising through life without direction.

*To discover more about Journey Therapy contact Suellen Raven on 020 8783 0994 or visit her website at: [www.thejourneytherapy.com](http://www.thejourneytherapy.com).*