



TreeSisters

GUIDE TO

FOREST BATHING



The Roots and Power of Forest Bathing

Though popularised in 1980s Japan as *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing, the practice of immersing oneself in Nature for healing and wellbeing is far older, rooted in traditions across the world. *Shinrin-yoku* translates to "taking in the forest atmosphere" and encourages a mindful presence in Nature, fostering physical, mental, and emotional balance.

For those who practise, forest bathing provides a gentle yet powerful antidote to the pressures of modern life. It offers a chance to unplug from our increasingly digital lives and reconnect with the sounds, smells, and tranquillity of the natural world, restoring a sense of peace and grounding.





The Science

The Japanese Government's research into the health benefits of spending time in forests, particularly through *Shinrin Yoku* (forest bathing), has shown significant findings. Just two hours a week of mindful exploration in a forest environment can bring measurable health improvements, such as a reduction in heart rate, lower blood pressure, decreased cortisol (the stress hormone), and improved memory and concentration (Li et al., 2008). This is consistent with studies suggesting that time in natural environments improves mental clarity, reduces mental fatigue, and boosts positive mood (Berman et al., 2012).

The mental health benefits of forest bathing are profound, with research indicating that it can alleviate fatigue, anxiety, and feelings of hostility, while promoting relaxation and calm (Park et al., 2007). One notable aspect is the presence of phytoncides, natural compounds released by trees that have been found to support the immune system (Morita et al., 2007). These findings were so significant that the Japanese Government officially recognised *Shinrin Yoku* as a health practice.

Similar findings have been observed globally. Research in the UK has shown that Nature-based activities like forest bathing are linked to improvements in mental wellbeing, providing a reminder of how reconnecting with the natural world can benefit both physical and mental health (Takayama et al., 2006).

These studies underline how crucial it is to make space for Nature in our lives, supporting our health and wellbeing in measurable ways.

“Shinrin Yoku is like a bridge.
By opening our senses it bridges the
gap between us and the natural world.”

Dr Qing Li, on forest bathing.



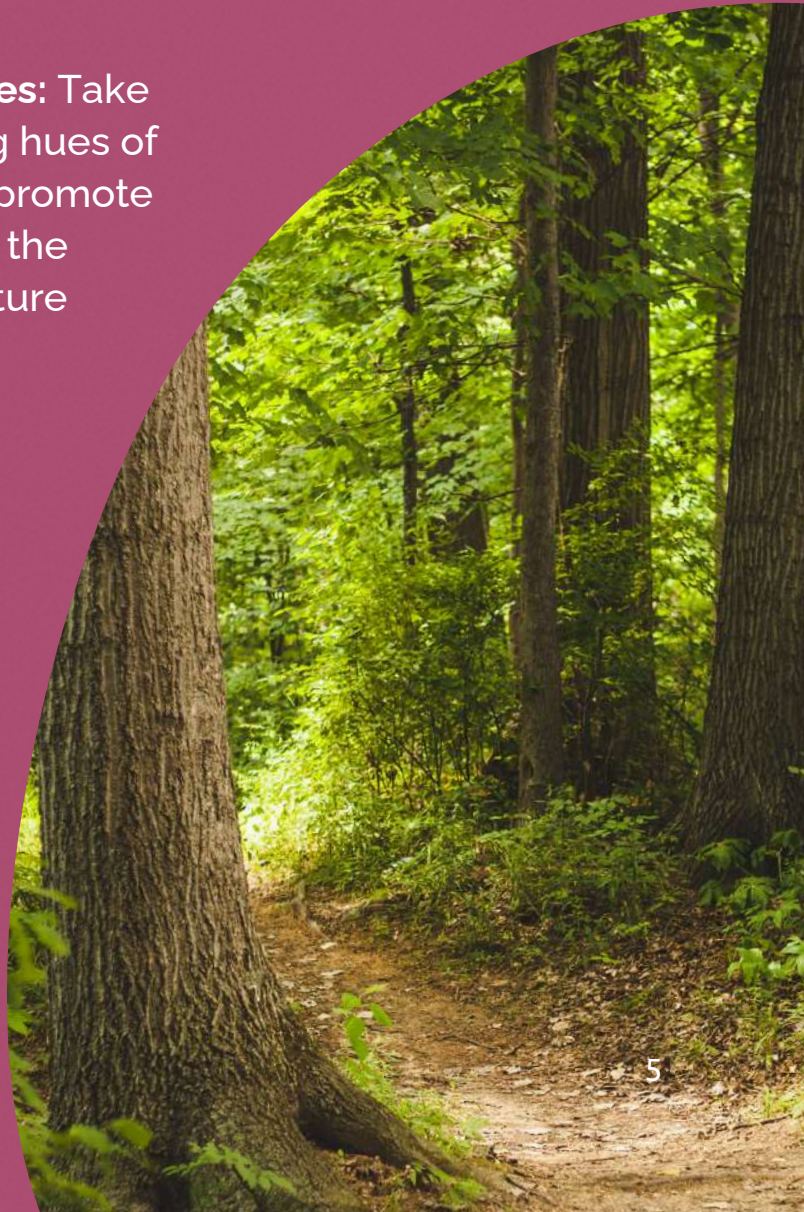
Getting Started:

- **Disconnect from devices:** Switch off your phone and other distractions to fully embrace the sensory experience of the forest and allow your mind to truly relax.
- **Set an intention:** Before you begin, take a moment to reflect on why you're there—whether to unwind, reconnect with Nature, or simply explore.
- **Take your time:** Move through the forest at a slower pace, giving yourself the chance to observe and absorb the details of your surroundings without rushing.
- **Practice deep breathing:** Inhale deeply into your abdomen, then exhale slowly, making the out-breath twice as long as the in-breath. This helps your body shift into a state of relaxation.
- **Engage your senses:** Observe the small details of Nature around you. What can you smell? What sounds do you hear? Notice the texture of the forest floor, the canopy, and all the sights around you.
- **Touch the earth:** If safe, try walking barefoot to connect more directly with the forest. Feel the ground under your feet, the roughness of bark, or the softness of moss.

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- **Practice mindful observation:** Find a quiet spot to sit or stand. Focus on simply being present and letting go of daily thoughts. Remaining still often invites wildlife to emerge around you.
- **Incorporate gentle movement:** Light stretching, yoga, or mindful walking can deepen your connection to the forest while helping you feel more grounded.
- **Drink in the atmosphere:** Breathe in slowly and consciously to fully absorb the phytoncides released by trees, which are known to support immune health and reduce stress.
- **Notice colours and textures:** Take time to absorb the calming hues of green and blue, shown to promote relaxation, while exploring the variety of textures that Nature offers.
- **Reflect:** When you finish, consider journaling your thoughts or feelings to deepen the experience and carry its benefits into your daily life.





FAQs

Do I need any special equipment or training for forest bathing?

No special equipment or training is required for forest bathing. All you need is an open mind, and a willingness to slow down and connect to the natural world. You don't need to practice alone, you can practice forest bathing with a friend if you'd prefer. Some people like to bring a journal or sketchbook to record their experiences, but this is entirely up to you. The most important thing is to approach forest bathing with a sense of curiosity, openness, and receptivity to the healing energies of the natural world.

How often should I practice forest bathing to experience its benefits?

There's no one-size-fits-all answer. To experience the benefits of forest bathing, aim for at least two hours per week in Nature, as supported by research in Japan that demonstrates noticeable health improvements with this frequency. This could be one longer session or a couple of shorter visits, depending on your schedule. For ongoing benefits, consistency is key. Consider incorporating forest bathing into your routine and listen to your body and adapt the frequency to suit your needs and lifestyle. Even a few minutes of mindful connection with Nature can offer a sense of calm and rejuvenation.





Is forest bathing a form of meditation?

While forest bathing and meditation share similarities, it is not a strict form of meditation in the traditional sense. Instead of focusing on quieting the mind or achieving a specific state of consciousness, forest bathing encourages you to engage all your senses and immerse fully in the present moment. It's more about experiencing and connecting with the natural world than about achieving a particular mental state. That said, like meditation, forest bathing can promote relaxation, mindfulness, and a sense of inner peace.

What if I live in a city or urban environment with limited access to Nature?

You can still incorporate elements of forest bathing into your daily life. Seek out local parks, botanical gardens, or Nature reserves where you can escape the hustle and bustle of city life and reconnect with the natural world. You can also bring elements of Nature into your home or workplace, such as houseplants, herb pots or even Nature-inspired art.

What are the benefits of forest bathing?

Forest bathing offers a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional benefits. Scientific research has shown that spending time in Nature can reduce stress levels, lower blood pressure, boost immune function, improve mood, enhance cognitive function, and increase feelings of wellbeing. Forest bathing has also been linked to improved sleep quality, increased creativity, and a greater sense of connection to the natural world and oneself. By regularly practising forest bathing, individuals can cultivate a deeper appreciation for the beauty and complexity of the natural environment while nurturing their own health and vitality.



Enhancing Your Experience Through Journaling

While not essential, journaling (or creating art) about your forest bathing experiences can deepen your connection to Nature and amplify the benefits of time spent outdoors. Setting aside time to reflect before or after your sessions allows you to fully engage with your surroundings and your inner world.

Use your journal to capture the sensations you experience during your practice—the sights, sounds, smells, and textures around you—and explore how they make you feel. Note any emotions, whether calm and tranquillity or excitement and wonder, and reflect on how your body responds to the forest's energies. This process can reveal insights about your connection to Nature and foster personal growth.

Below are some optional prompts to guide your journaling, with space on the following pages to capture your reflections:

Before You Begin:

- What drew you to the forest today, and what is hoped for from this experience?
- What emotions or thoughts are present when preparing to connect with Nature?

During Your Practice:

- What scents, sounds, colours, or textures are capturing your attention?
- What emotions does the forest evoke, and why?
- Is there something in the forest that reflects a part of your life or emotions?

After Your Practice:

- How has your mood or mindset shifted since?
- Did the forest offer any lesson or insight today?
- How can you bring this calm or clarity into daily life?

Let your journal become a space for self-discovery as you strengthen your relationship with Nature through the practice.

DATE/LOCATION

MOOD BEFORE
SESSION (CIRCLE)



MOOD AFTER
SESSION (CIRCLE)



Forest Bathing Journal

YOUR THOUGHTS

4 THINGS YOU NOTICED

HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW?



DATE/LOCATION

MOOD BEFORE
SESSION (CIRCLE)



MOOD AFTER
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To learn more about forest bathing,
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with Nature, please visit:

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