



FOREST BATHING



An invitation to slow down
and connect with nature



Pittsburgh
Parks
Conservancy

• WHAT IS FOREST BATHING? •

Forest bathing, modeled after the Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku, is immersing in nature to build deeper relationships and enhance health and well-being.

During a forest bathing experience, invitations (suggested activities) offer room for listening, stillness, reflection, and heightened sensory awareness.

The invitations are open-ended. There is no expectation for how to participate or what you experience or receive. Rather, you spend time noticing and feeling with a quiet and accepting presence.

The beauty of forest bathing is that each experience is unique. There is no one right way to forest bathe.

Greetings!

Greetings from Patty and Kathryn! We are Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy staff members and certified forest bathing guides through the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs. We love nature and want to share its potential for healing with others.

We are excited to introduce forest bathing experiences which incorporate time for slowing down, space for contemplation, and moments of curiosity and joy.

This guide was compiled to offer tips for forest bathing on your own. We hope that it will help you on your journey to connect deeply with nature.

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the community of forest therapy guides in Pittsburgh and around the world who have offered their friendship and helped us to develop our practice. Special thanks to Pittsburgh-based guide Sandi Miller for contributing to the content of this booklet.

Warmly,

Patty & Kathryn



Forest bathing is a process of...

slowing
down

Opening
the
senses

immersing
in nature

through invitation and reflection:

do what
you are
called
to do

let your
body lead
the way

use your
intuition
& senses

Where ALL is welcome and
there is no right or wrong way

• FOREST BATHING HISTORY •



The practice of shinrin-yoku draws inspiration from Shinto, Buddhist and other Japanese cultural traditions. Shinrin-yoku translates to "forest bath" where one is immersed in a forest environment.

In the 1980's, Japan experienced rapid urbanization and technological advances which effected the physical and psychological health of its population. The government launched many research studies including ones asking "What is the effect of immersing in nature on health?" Forest bathing parks were created in urban centers as part of the research. The data clearly showed health improvements.

Volumes of data continue to suggest **GOING OUTSIDE IS GREAT FOR OUR HEALTH**. In 2008, M. Amos Clifford brought forest bathing practices to the U.S. Clifford and others later formed the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs in 2014, which has resulted in the training of thousands of forest bathing guides.

What happens when people spend time in nature?

The research shows that lots of good things happen!

Mental Wellbeing

Reduction of stress & anxiety
Mood stabilization
Enhanced creativity
Deeper sense of interconnectedness
Greater care for the living world

Physical Wellbeing

Stronger immune system
Lower blood pressure
Restoration of focus, clarity, & memory
Better sleep

• GETTING READY TO FOREST BATHE •

THE MINDSET

Forest Bathing is flexible. It can be done anywhere:

- Inside looking out a window
- Inside with a house plant or nature items
- In your yard
- At a park or on a trail

It's a good idea to find an easy path that is not too busy

You can forest bathe for 5 minutes, an hour, a whole day, or longer.

This guide is invitational and can be adapted.

Let your body, heart and spirit lead the way.

Consider putting your phone on silent.

Let go of expectations and experience nature.

For more on the science behind forest bathing, visit:

anft.earth/research

FOR SAFETY

Know the hazards in the area you are visiting. In the Pittsburgh area know what poison ivy looks like and do a tick check when you get home.

Let someone know where you are going and when you will be done forest bathing.

Bring bug spray, sunscreen, water, and a small first aid kit.

Check the weather before going out.

Trust your intuition. If something feels wrong, leave the area.

FOR COMFORT

- Dress in layers
- Bring snacks
- Consider bringing trekking poles and a sitting pad or small stool
- Bring a journal and something to write with

BEGINNING YOUR EXPERIENCE: PLEASURES OF PRESENCE

Start this invitation by finding a comfortable position where you can spend some time opening your senses to notice what is around you. Take your time, take a few deep breaths. You might consider doing this for five to ten minutes, or for any amount of time that feels good to you. Before you begin, read through the following prompts to help you to connect with your senses. You don't have to do them all — they are simply suggestions.

TOUCH

With your eyes closed, what does it feel like to be in your skin right now?

- What does the air feel like on your skin?
- Try touching your skin. How does it feel to you?
- How about textures of your clothing? What do they feel like?
- If you're outside, reach down and touch the ground. What does it feel like?

HEARING

With your eyes closed, listen to the sounds around you.

- What do you hear closest to you and what is farthest away?
- Can you follow a sound and see where it goes?
- Which sound is really calling out for your attention?

SMELL

With your eyes closed, what can you smell?

- If you turn your head a bit, can you smell different things?
- If you lift your nose, can you smell more things?
- If you're outside, reach down and touch the ground. What does the earth smell like?

TASTE

With your eyes closed, can you taste anything in your mouth?

- Maybe it's the last thing you ate or drank.
- Now open your mouth and breath in. Can you taste anything at all?
- You might want to try making your lips into a straw shape and suck in the air. Any taste?

SIGHT

With your eyes closed, and if you feel comfortable, try turning around slowly until you feel like stopping.

- Enjoy the sensations of being in that direction.
- Then ever so slowly, start opening your eyes as if it's first thing in the morning.
- What do the things in front of you look like? What do you notice most?

What are you noticing?

You can also try paying attention to each of your senses while walking.



• WHAT'S IN MOTION •

Spend some time noticing what is in motion around you.

You might walk at a very slow pace or stand still.

Let your body lead the way — you may feel inclined to wander in a certain direction or pause to watch something that captures your attention.

If you feel your thoughts drawn away, gently turn your attention back to noticing what is in motion.

You may wish to set a timer for 10-15 minutes.

What are you noticing?

In forest bathing, we refer to all things in nature as "beings". A being could be a leaf, a rock, a piece of bark, or anything in nature.



• MORE INVITATIONS TO DEEPEN THE EXPERIENCE •

Take a moment. What is the forest inviting you to experience? You can use these examples and also create your own.

SIT SPOT

A sit spot invitation can be practiced anywhere — your yard, community garden, a local park, or forest. Even if you can't go outside, sit near an open window and let nature in. Find a spot where you can be comfortable for about 20 minutes or more. You are invited to practice slowing down, sitting quietly and noticing everything around you. What might unfold around you? What might nature offer while spending time in your sit spot?

Try scanning these for a prompt to read while in your sit spot:



THE JOY OF TINY BEINGS



As you wander or sit, notice tiny beings on the ground. Which ones are appealing to you? Gather some and arrange them however you would like.

THE MUSIC OF THIS PLACE

Wander out and listen to the music of this place. How many sounds are there? Perhaps echo them back? Maybe you have a sound that you would like to add to the music.





WHEN YOUR WALK IS ENDING

Pause and recognize that you are in a transition.

What are you noticing?

You can mark the end of your time in nature by:

- Taking deep breaths
- Drinking a cup of tea
- Whispering a message to the land
- Writing or drawing
- Doing whatever helps you to end the experience

"Each (forest bathing) walk I have been on has been a gift... Slowing down to observe the internal and external things that I can see and feel teaches me to do it when I need to slow down on any day... I have learned skills to help me calm my soul and soothe my mind."

- Forest Bathing Participant -



JOIN A GUIDED WALK

During one of our forest bathing sessions, the guides offer invitations that help participants to slow down, immerse in nature, and build community through opportunities to share what we are experiencing.



The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy offers walks year-round, led by staff and other certified guides in the Pittsburgh area. We invite you to connect with us — check out our seasonal programming guide for a guided forest bathing event near you, or reach out to us to plan a private event. Visit: pittsburghparks.org/events



RESOURCES • TO SUPPORT • YOUR JOURNEY

Visit [pittsburghparks.org/
wellbeing](https://pittsburghparks.org/wellbeing) or scan the
QR code to:



- Download this guide
- Explore suggestions for spaces in parks for a mindful break
- Watch mindful minute videos
- Browse resources such as recommended books, videos, and readings

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