



Shinrin Yoku: The Art of Japanese Forest Bathing

Yoshifumi Miyazaki

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Shinrin Yoku or 'forest bathing' was developed in Japan in the 1980s and brings together ancient ways and wisdom with cutting edge environmental health science. There are now forest bathing stations and walkways scattered throughout Japan, although the good news is that we can all benefit from this simple practice.

Simply put, forest bathing is the practice of walking slowly through the woods, in no hurry, for a morning, an afternoon or a day. It is a practice that involves all the senses and as you gently walk and breathe deeply, the essential oils of the trees are absorbed by your body and have an extraordinary effect on stress levels, positive feelings, energy levels and even promote the activity of NK (anticancer) cells and the balancing of blood sugar levels and blood pressure.

In this wonderful book, by the leading expert in the field, science meets nature and mindfulness, as we are encouraged to bathe in the trees and become observers of both the nature around us and the goings on of our own minds.

Shinrin Yoku: The Art of Japanese Forest Bathing Details

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From Reader Review Shinrin Yoku: The Art of Japanese Forest Bathing for online ebook

Etienne says

A book about the power of the trees/forest and how much we can benefit to live surround by those. I have an interest about the benefit of trees for health (physical and psychological) for a while now and this book could be a really good introduction for those who want to get an good tour of it all. I didn't learn much, but like I said, I already know a bunch of stuff, but the newcomers should learn a few things. The photographs are great and it has a good balance between informations, study/methodology, and goals/exercises. And it's not just about Japanese forest, the foundation of this book can be use or study worldwide in every type of forest.

Anna says

This neat little book is based around a simple concept: we evolved in nature, and stepping back into nature--literally, through the concept of "forest bathing"--can help alleviate some of the stress of modern urban life. On the surface it seems a little obvious; anyone who enjoys camping, gardening, or even walking in the park can tell you that those hobbies help them relax. Here, though, the author presents the research he and his colleagues conducted into what exactly happens in the body when we take a moment to appreciate the natural world.

From the beginning, I already felt drawn into the concept. Just looking at the beautiful photographs of Japanese forests helped me escape my office break room for a few minutes. Living in a desert, I also appreciated the alternatives for people who can't get away to the forest on a regular basis: bonsai, flower arranging, or even essential oils, to name just a few. (Other resources on forest bathing do mention that the specifics of the landscape are less important than getting outdoors, but I don't recall that in this book.) There is a brief section on stretches and physical activity to help get the most out of forest bathing.

Unfortunately, I can't decide if this book covered too much or too little. Many of the concepts felt overdone at times, with certain statistics repeated within one or two pages of each other. On the flip side, the researcher tackles an almost dizzying array of topics, including how to use certain essential oils, the significance of different kinds of wood, and an overview of forest bathing retreats around Japan. I also found the research to be uneven: while some studies were very thoughtfully designed and executed, it seemed like the author exaggerated the implications of others.

This idea is just gaining traction with American audiences, but I think it's a valuable one. We could all use a little more time in nature, and if this book helps inspire someone to do so, I'm glad for it. This book is a pleasant, if ambitious, introduction to forest bathing loaded with beautiful photographs, scientific research, and a wide range of options for those of us who are ready to dive in.

I received a copy of this book from NetGalley to read in exchange for an honest review.

Melissa says

Books like this are scary because some people choose this type of theory over pills and real medical help.

Serious forms of depressions and other medical problems will not go away by hanging out in a forest or park. Most therapist do recommend going outside or taking a walk because it can be helpful.

There are beautiful pictures of trees which I enjoyed more than the writing. Many of the information is already well known from studies and research throughout the years. I really just wished they did not refer to it as therapy.

Of course this will not stop me from enjoying nature and the beauty of forests.

Ann says

I love trees and walking in dappled shade; the varied green color tones and the scents of woodlands are soothing to me. This book confirms that forests are wonderful places to spend quality time through science and extensive experience in Japan where 69% of the country is covered in forests and the culture appreciates nature and trees.

Bookish says

As a counsellor, I like this book because it acts as a reminder that simple things, such as a walk in the woods or a vase of flowers, can promote relaxation. More than that, it provides evidence for the calming value of nature and explains its impact on our body's physiology.

This is important because the idea of connecting to nature can feel a woefully inadequate response to stress. How many of us have felt fobbed off when it is suggested that we "go for a walk" at a moment of emotional turmoil?

Of course, the truth is that nature might not be able to fix everything. Nevertheless, having read this book, I am much more likely to consider taking a walk in my local park next time I feel stressed. Why? Because now I understand, and feel confidence in, how making this choice could help my body to calm down.

I think this book will encourage me to think more about the need to take breaks from the trappings of our modern world too. Time away from technology. Time away from the city.

The final thing I will take from this book is the need to bring more nature into our cities. This book has given me a renewed sense of appreciation for the community gardens in the place I call home. A greater sense of gratitude for those who, in various roles, advocate for the need for time, and space, to appreciate the natural world within our urban environments. It has motivated me to proactively support such projects.

It is a lot to take from a book and, for this reason, I should perhaps have awarded it four stars - it is definitely a book that, for me, sits firmly in the middle of three and four stars. The reason, in the end, I went for three stars is that I was left with so many questions. Do we experience the same benefits when we walk along the coast? How do the relaxation benefits of being in the forest compare with the stress-relieving impact of anxiety medications?

It is not that a book should address everything. But, in the end, this book felt more like the summary of a research career or a description of the emergence of Shinrin Yoku as an academic discipline. This is not a bad thing. But, by the end, I wanted a little more than this.

The book was lovely though and I enjoyed what was presented. The author's account of his early career was

as heart-warming as it was inspirational. It was fascinating to read about the way in which this area of interest found a home within academia. And the research presented in the final part of the book was clear and informative. There is also beautiful photography throughout. Mmm, I may yet return and upgrade this to four stars ...

Lynndell says

Thanks to NetGalley and Timber Press for the opportunity to read and review *Shinrin Yoku: The Japanese Art of Forest Bathing* by Yoshifumi Miyazaki. This book is meant for reducing stress and the title alone relaxes me. Shinrin-yoku, nature therapy and forest therapy both embody “Japan’s Relationship with Nature”. Effects of nature on stress relief and the body are discussed with beautiful photographs interspersed between the scientific information. Information is even given for when getting outdoors to relax isn’t a possibility; tips and tricks that make you feel like you’re really out in nature can be convincing enough to relieve stress. A wonderful guide to nature therapy relieves stress just by reading it, 4 stars!

Maya Panika says

A true delight. A book about the simplest of concepts, forest bathing - as sun bathing means surrounding oneself in sunlight and sea bathing is getting into the ocean, immersing oneself in the sea, forest bathing is about being inside the forest, becoming one with the peace and sensual pleasures of the woodland, reducing blood pressure, reducing heart rate and stress hormones - but hopefully, mostly, taking great pleasure in being amongst the sights the sounds, the perfume, of the woods.

The chapters lead one from the origins and history of the concept, then into the actual practice of forest bathing, and bringing the forest closer to home. Then there’s a dash of the science that underlies our natural affinity with nature and the benefits to being out and about in the natural world. The information is given in small packages - words are few and simple and come well- wrapped in delightful images; like everything Japanese, the packaging is half the pleasure.

It’s not an instruction manual, a forest-bathing for dummies. It’s beautiful, first and foremost, and inspirational. It encourages the reader to get outdoors, into the woods, and breathe, relax, and simply ‘be’. A very beautiful book I’ve read several times already, - not cover to cover, just dipping in and out. I found it remarkably uplifting during my recent stays in hospital, when I couldn’t get out into nature as I’m accustomed to doing. This was a delightful ‘next best thing’ to the real thing. Refreshing, reviving; a constant joy

Erica says

Mostly, I read this for the pictures.

They're beautiful.

I think maybe if you're feeling at odds and can't seem to get a hold of who you are and where you're going but aren't to the point where your therapist is suggesting switching meds, then *Shinrin Yoku* could be helpful? This book looks at the restorative aspects of spending time in nature. Maybe because I live in Colorado and that's all we do here, I was already pretty familiar with a lot of the information in here.

I think perhaps the point is to present this not-new-information in a more scientific manner so that doctors remember to tell their patients to take their pills, drink plenty of water, don't self-medicate, and take walks in

forests. I'm not sure about that, though. I had a really hard time figuring out who is to benefit from these forest bathing studies.

It may sound like I'm poo-pooing the notion of spending time outdoors for the sake of your mental health. I assure you, that is not what I'm trying to do. I was just puzzled at how the information collected by the author and his colleagues warranted an entire book rather than just a white paper for the health and wellness community. Studies are shared then information is repeated and I'm not sure who the intended audience is. I admit, after the 1/3 mark, I skimmed the rest of my way through.

Also, perhaps it should be noted that this is probably a more useful book for people who have access to nature. For those who can't get out to woods or the beach or a park, this probably seems a bit pointless.

Again, this information could be super useful to someone but, for me, it was the pictures I enjoyed.

Jen says

I have always been interested in the link between health and nature. This book goes into some of the science and some of the scientists trying to show how being in or around nature can yield positive health benefits.

The book was interesting, though slightly repetitive. My favorite part of the book was the absolutely gorgeous pictures of nature. I wonder if seeing pictures of nature can still yield health benefits? I know I felt more relaxed when looking at the pictures! Though in eBook format, the pictures were sometimes split between screens, which wasn't ideal.

This book definitely makes me want to go to Japan and go to one of the nature programs they have for shinrin yoku. Japan is beautiful!

I would recommend this book if you are interested in health, nature and bio-science. 3 solid stars.

My thanks to NetGalley and Timber Press for an eARC copy of this book to read and review.

Lily says

Shinrin Yoku, by Yoshifumi Miyazaki, delves into the scientific research behind forest therapy, or forest bathing. Forest bathing is “the Japanese practice of seeking a deep and meditative connection with nature.” The author has been a forest researcher for many years; he presents a very comprehensive study of forest therapy, from all the different ways we can practice forest therapy and incorporate it in our lives, to all the scientific research performed to back up the results of forest therapy.

This book has beautiful pictures that inspire you to get out immediately and go explore nature. While I enjoyed the book as a whole, I would've liked to see more on how we can use forest bathing in our daily lives. All the scientific studies were interesting, but they weren't very relevant to the general reader; they would've fit in better in a scientific journal.

(I received an advance copy from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.)

Elizabeth Amber Love says

For as long as I can remember, I referred to any walk in the woods as “hiking.” I supposed to other people hiking refers to strenuous ascents and descents over mountains and cliffs. I believe it was in 2017 when I came across a meme on Instagram explaining that there’s a Japanese practice of walking through nature, particularly a forest, and soaking every bit of stimuli in which was called “shinrin-yoku.”

As a newly credentialed yoga teacher and still writer-at-large, I was immediately curious when I saw Yoshifumi Miyazaki’s book, “Shinrin-Yoku: The Japanese Art of Forest Bathing” on NetGalley’s catalog to review.

The word shinrin-yoku was coined in 1982 by Tomohide Akiyama, a forest worker who wanted to increase the number of visitors to Japan’s park systems. He invented this creative word shinrin-yoku which is translated as “forest bathing” and it worked. More people began going to their parks.

To get the best understanding of why the park visits were important, one has to look beyond the marketing and promotions of Japan’s park system and the calculating tally of visitors. It was intuitive to them that being in the forest, feeling the ground under their feet, listening to the birds, and smelling the deep fragrances of the earth improved their health.

In 1990, experiments began which measured the stress hormone cortisol of people as they experienced the forests. Various experiments and teams have started and stopped or started and drew the conclusions possible that day’s technology; but now there are modern 2018 scientists digging into the research of shinrin-yoku and its benefits.

The scientists plainly state that shinrin-yoku is not in itself a “medicinal cure.” It’s a preventative treatment that can keep stress-related illnesses at bay which alleviates the strain on medical services.

The author, Yoshifumi Miyazaki wants the term “forest therapy” to be used when referencing the scientific studies of shinrin-yoku. The book is filled with gorgeous photos and has a coffee table book style to the page design utilizing a lot of white space. Miyazaki incorporates quotes and lines of poetry (always something I love) pertinent to nature.

Practitioners and believers of Chinese feng shui will find a lot of Miyazaki’s advice relative to theirs. Bring the outdoors inside. Utilize what’s available whether it’s a park nearby or your backyard garden or a Bonzai tree. Yoga also unites the universe’s natural elements with humanity through multiple ways: poses corresponding to five sacred elements, chakra correspondences, the five koshas, and mudras just to illustrate a few examples.

“Shinrin-Yoku: The Japanese Art of Forest Bathing” includes diagrams to accompany Miyazaki’s text. Stress > leads a seeker to the forest > there’s a physiological reaction where the immune system gets a boost > (subjects may have differing outcomes) > Illness prevention > which would reduce the impact on health services. Miyazaki calls for sustainability due to the impact of urbanization. He states that it’s not a city versus nature battle: it’s a matter of human beings requiring exposure to elements that city’s dominate. He lists many contributing side effects to urbanization such as workload demands that are excessive, inability to get enough restful sleep, and constant over-stimulation leading to increases in serious health conditions. The book lays out the science of the biology and physiology in easy to understand language.

The message isn’t prosaic “Do it and you’ll feel better” mentality. The author gives clear conclusions to the health benefits.

If you are familiar with tree lore of the Celts, you will appreciate the section, "The Significance of Trees in Japan," which breaks down the importance of five tree varieties: cedar, kadomatsu, bamboo, cherry blossom, and bonsai.

Chapter three dives into a huge offering of suggestive practices so that any reader would be able to find something that they are capable of doing. There are samples of meditation to do among those suggestions. There are tips on aromatherapy and the use of essential oils with notes on the chemistry and benefits of tree oils.

Even if you don't think practices like yoga are "your thing" the basic foundation that fresh air and time unplugged from machines is good for you is something everyone can understand. If you are a fan of yoga, aromatherapy, stress relief programs, and practical ways to enjoy nature at home, this book gets my highest recommendation.

Leanne says

[Review about both Shinrin Yoku: The Art of Japanese Forest Bathing by Miyazaki and Forest Bathing by Li] I recently saw an article in the Guardian: "Doctors in Shetland are to start prescribing birdwatching, rambling and beach walks in the Atlantic winds to help treat chronic and debilitating illnesses for the first time." These illnesses include ailments such as mental illness, diabetes, heart disease, stress and other conditions. I was immediately reminded of the Japanese practice of forest bathing and bought both books.

First, I was surprised that there were many books on the subject! I chose these two because they were available on audible. So what to say?

Both books go over almost the same ground but if I would recommend Miyazaki's over Li's, mainly because his introduction to Japanese culture in terms of nature and aesthetics is much more detailed and evocative.

When I came back to California after 25 years in Japan, one of the biggest impressions I had was of being totally cut off from nature. Isn't that strange since California truly is blessed with beautiful mountains and beaches. There are wonderful hiking trails everywhere and it is basically sunny every single day--so you would think I would feel more embedded in nature here. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. Reading these books (Li is based in Tokyo and Miyazaki in Chiba), I realized just how much I was missing Japanese culture and seasonal activities. The calendar for me used to move from plum to peach to cherry blossoms and then ajisai and lotus, to be followed by the moon and then the glorious maple leaves... finally the end of year celebrations in which nature also plays a role. Nature is a part of life.

These things were all done communally--in families and with friends. To go cherry blossom viewing and maple leaf hunting and moon viewing... people always talk about the weather and it is even how you begin letters to people--with a seasonal greeting. In poetry and well, in all literature, nature plays a major role...

Coming back--despite being surrounded by the splendors of California-- I feel abandoned.

Both books have excellent introductions to the role of nature in Japanese culture and life. Like I said, Miyazaki is a bit better. But Li's book is more beautifully published and is nice to hold in your hands.

Li's book is also very nice on EO Wilson's biophilia.

Japan is covered in forests. But not a lot of pristine untouched forest. And both books seem to conflate the

effects of being in any forest with having houseplants or using cedar oil diffusers. That being embedded in nature makes us feel better seems to be a fact. But I loved -and highly recommend-- The Hidden Life of Trees to find out the way different kinds of forests (untouched and wild versus forests made for lumber, beech versus oaks, as well as the entire ecosystem, including mushrooms)

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Mijazmija says

Proč přiroda snižuje stres? Jak jedna procházka denně ovlivní náš nervový systém? To nám vysvětluje japonská terapie lesem #shinrinyoku. Já měla japonský lesy dodnes zařazený v kategorii "sebevraždy", ale ovidně se začali v Japonsku snažit, aby v lesích život spíš začínal, než končil. A co mě nejvíc překvapilo?

1. výsledky výzkumů lidí pravidelně navštěvujících les
2. kapitola o všímavé chůzi, rozvíjení intuice a zapojení všech našich smyslů
3. tipy na to, jak využít léčebné síly přírody a za pomoci stromů a zeleně zlepšit kvalitu života.

Knížku u nás vydalo nakladatelství Grada.

thebookiv says

Lovely pictures of trees, but for some reason I'd anticipated a more detailed read. The studies were informative, but I thought there would be something more than the simple fact that walking through a forested area can potentially lower blood pressure. It was light and lovely, but I really thought there would be more substance to a lifestyle choice that primes nature therapy as a viable preventative measure to diseases of the body and mind.

Suzanne says

Forest-bathing. Sounds like something a hippy would do, I hear you say. I'm not going to lie that I had those initial prejudices too. Although if you know me, you'll know that I'm very interested in how nature can help our health. I love aromatherapy oils and all that sort of thing. So I thought why not?

I really enjoyed this book. Well I'd say it's more of a guide to be honest; a guide to improving our relationship with nature and how we can protect the trees that give so much to us. We often forget that.

I love the way the book is set out into four easy-to-read sections, from the science behind the forest-bathing, and I mean pretty in-depth science with technical words, but not to the point that you can't understand. To then how we can practice it ourselves, inside and outside. Then most importantly, how we as a planet can protect the trees. It really does have everything you'd ever need to know on the subject.
