



## **Forest Bathing is Not a Walk in the Woods**

A couple of years ago, I decided to try out a HIKE with a group run by CHARLIE COOK, of WILD EARTH ADVENTURES. Charlie runs WEEKEND hikes, that start in the spring and occur every weekend until fall. Last winter he added a couple of hikes on SNOW shoes. My family and I frequently hike in all seasons except the winter. We grew up in the TROPICS and we can't do any activities that involve mobility on frozen water. I wanted to go on a group hike because I thought I would learn a lot from a seasoned hiker.

SPELL: EARTH

SPELL: TROPICS

WHAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DOES THE AUTHOR'S FAMILY UNDERTAKE? HIKES

WHICH SEASON DOES CHARLIE START HIS GROUP HIKES? SPRING

IN WINTER WHAT KIND OF SHOES ARE USED FOR HIKING? SNOW

WHAT KIND OF WATER DOES THE AUTHOR'S FAMILY NOT KNOW HOW TO MOVE ON? FROZEN

NAME A SPORT THAT TAKES PLACE ON ICE (SKATING, CURLING, ICE-HOCKEY, ICE-FISHING ETC.)



Imagecredit: @toomastartes, Unsplash

Question Type Key

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Apart from that, I had just finished reading BILL BRYSON's book, A WALK IN THE WOODS. That book is about hiking the APPALACHIAN TRAIL, also known as the A.T. which is 2,184 miles long. It starts in the state of GEORGIA and ends in MAINE. Bryson met a lot of hikers who were on the trail to complete it end to end. These kind of hikers are called THRU-HIKERS. Charlie is someone who hiked the A.T. in the 1970's. It takes an average of 5-7 months to do this. Most people hike segments over weeks, some for a few hours even. I was fascinated by the kind of personality that could go on a hike lasted for months. It seemed full of discomfort and hard to do physically and mentally. It felt like a punishment. All you could do all day long for months was eat, sleep, and hike, over and over.

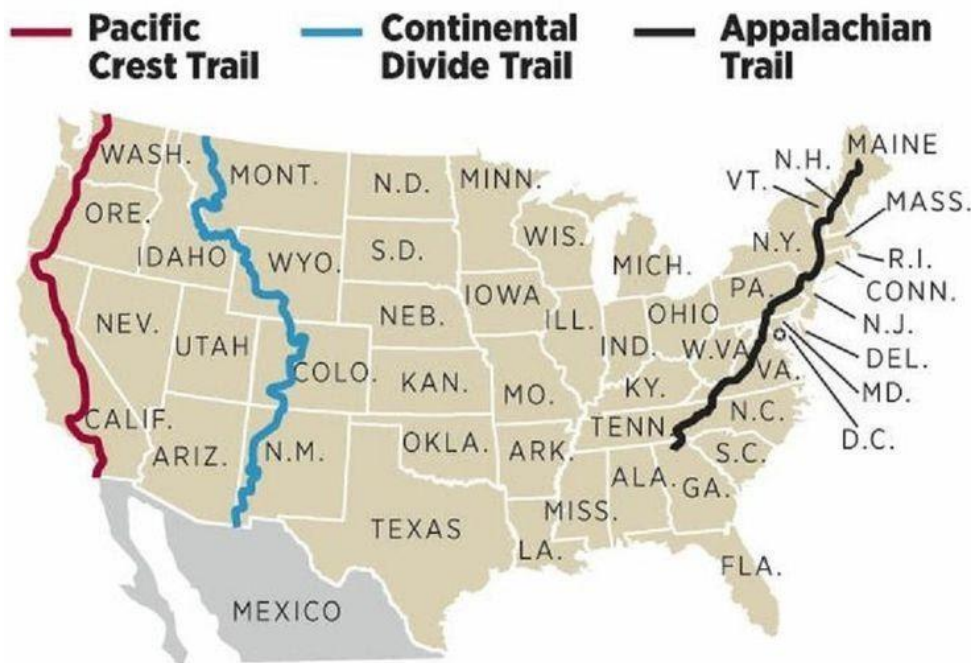


Image credit: spokesman.com

SPELL: PERSONALITY

SPELL: AVERAGE

WHAT IS BRYSON'S BOOK CALLED? A \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE WOODS? WALK

HOW MANY MILES LONG IS THE AT? 2,184 MILES

WHAT IS A PERSON WHO HIKES THE ENTIRE AT TRAIL CALLED? THRU-HIKER

TO THE AUTHOR, WHAT DOES A LONG THRU-HIKE FEEL LIKE? PUNISHMENT

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WHICH COAST OF THE US IS THE APPALACHAIN TRAIL ON? EAST  
NAME ONE OF THE STATES THE TRAIL HAS AN END POINT IN. MAINE, GEORGIA  
IF IT TOOK CHARLIE 360 DAYS TO HIKE THE A.T. WHAT'S THE AVERAGE NUMBER  
OF MILES HE HIKED IN A DAY?  $2184/360=6.06$

When I hiked with Charlie, I learnt ONE main idea. I usually go on hikes, because, it is one place where I truly enjoy being in motion. Walking is my main form of exercise. Hiking is walking, except it is in natural surroundings. I enjoy hiking more, than URBAN walks. I ASSUMED that Charlie and all other hikers would be drawn to hiking for the same reason. Turns out Charlie said that the most important reason for him to hike, was to get out of a house and allow his body to engage with NATURE. He said, our homes, cars and workplaces are so regulated for TEMPERATURE, SOUND, SMELL, SIGHT, that our bodies do not ever go into sensory AROUSAL. (AROUSAL means our body's alertness to cope with and regulate to a positive or negative change in a sensory input)

SPELL: TEMPERATURE

SPELL: URBAN

SPELL: SOUND

WHAT OTHER FORM OF EXERCISE IS HIKING LIKE? WALKING  
WHAT DOES CHARLIE LIKE HIS BODY TO ENGAGE WITH? NATURE  
HOW MANY MAIN IDEAS DID I GET FROM CHARLIE? ONE  
OUR BODIES ALERTNESS TO COPE WITH CHANGE IN A SENSORY INPUT IS CALLED?  
AROUSAL  
NAME ONE OF THE THINGS THAT CHARLIE SAID OUR HOMES ARE REGULATED  
FOR (TEMPERATURE, SOUND, SMELL, SIGHT)

Charlie told me that we heat and cool all our spaces, so that it exactly suits our needs. We deprive ourselves the pleasure of walking into our homes from the outdoors chilled to the bone, to wrap our hands around a bowl of hot soup, and have that lovely warmth creep into us. Homes today are increasingly SICK homes. Because we heat or cool our homes so much, we invest a lot in INSULATING them. Because of EFFICIENT insulation, our homes do not BREATHE. We do not allow fresh air to come in, and STALE air to go out, especially in winter. Internal POLLUTANTS like mold, carpet dust, chemical vapors from flooring and walls fill

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our homes. This makes our homes sick. Not only do we deprive our bodies of the pleasure and intensity of our sensory world, we also live in sick homes.

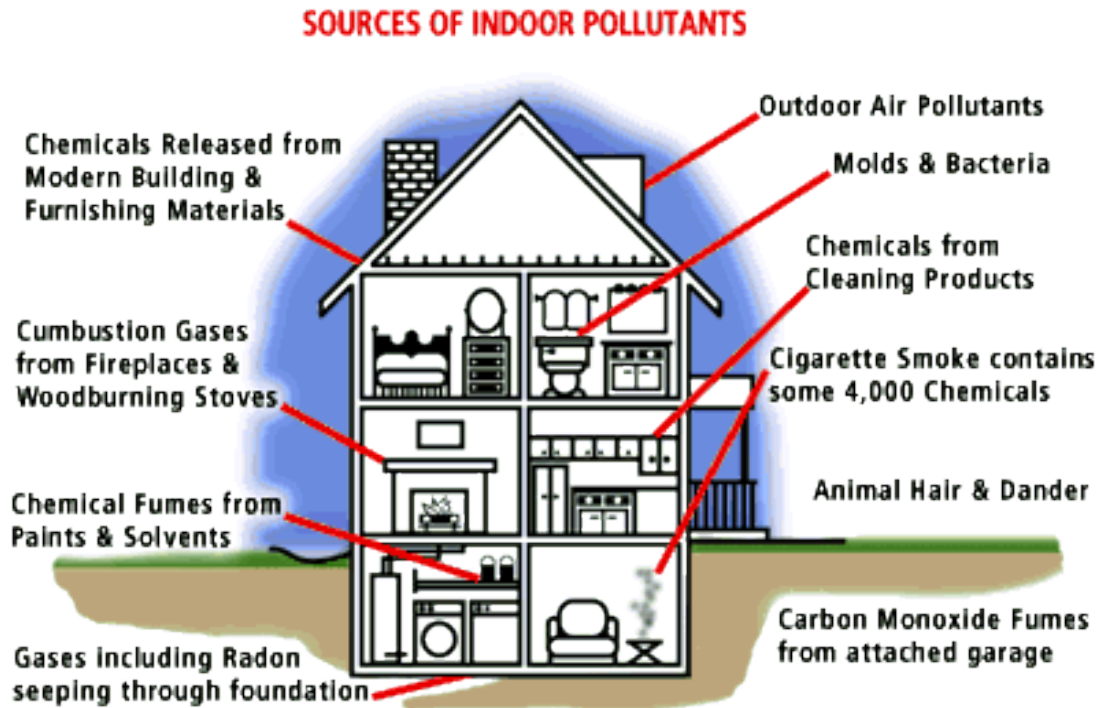


Image Credit: [advairquality.com](http://advairquality.com)

WHAT HELPS A HOME TO RETAIN EITHER ITS WARMTH OR COOL? INSULATION  
WHAT DO HOMES GET, WHEN WE DON'T ALLOW THEM TO BREATHE? SICK  
NAME A POLLUTANT. DUST, VAPORS, MOLD  
WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF FRESH? STALE  
WHAT OTHER SENSORY PLEASURES HAVE MODERN HOMES DEPRIVED US OF?

According to a UNITED NATIONS report published in 2014, By 2050, 66% of the world's population is PROJECTED to live in cities. According to a study sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency, or the EPA, the average American spends 93% of his or her time indoors. Most of this time will be in insulated work places that don't breathe and harbor pollutants. Where the concentrations of some pollutants are often 2 to 5 times higher than typical outdoor concentrations. Added to that people with poor health, young children and

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seniors are the ones who spend more time inside homes. They are the most vulnerable.

SPELL: TYPICAL

SPELL: OUTDOOR

HOW MUCH TIME, DOES THE AVERAGE AMERICAN SPEND OUTDOORS? 100-93=7%

BY 2050, HOW MUCH OF THE WORLDS POPULATION WILL LIVE IN CITIES? 66%

WHAT DOES THE EPA PROTECT? THE... ENVIRONMENT

NAME ONE CATEGORY OF PEOPLE WHO SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME INDOORS  
SICK, YOUNG, OLD, PEOPLE WITH POOR HEALTH, YOUNG CHILDREN, SENIORS

People move to cities for good reasons. Cities offer more JOB opportunities, more CHOICES in education, lifestyle, cultural diversity, community life. Yet, and this is the PARADOX (a contradiction), of living in a crowded, concrete-walled, green-poor, urban environment takes something away from our very essence, our PRIMAL (relating to early stages in evolutionary development) need to be close to nature.

SPELL: OPPORTUNITY

SPELL: PRIMAL

WHAT KIND OF NEED REQUIRES US TO BE CLOSE TO NATURE? PRIMAL

WHAT KIND OF ENVIRONMENT TAKE SOMETHING AWAY FROM OUR ESSENCE?  
URBAN

NAME ONE THING THAT I MENTIONED THAT CITIES OFFER MORE CHOICES IN  
JOBS, EDUCATION, LIFESTYLE

WHAT DO THE WORDS GREEN-POOR SUGGEST ABOUT A CITY NEIGHBORHOOD?

Japan, according to the UN ranks 39<sup>th</sup> highest in POPULATION DENSITY in the world. That is the POPULATION of a country divided by the LAND AREA. Population Density gives you a sense of how closely people have to live next to each other. Japan has an ancient tradition that tries to balance out the drain from urban living. It's known as SHINRIN-YOKU, or "FOREST BATHING." It's the practice of spending time with trees in order to gain from their many health benefits. In a book, Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness, DR.

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QING LI, an expert in forest medicine, introduces readers to the HEALING practice of forest bathing — and the art and science of how trees can enrich your life.

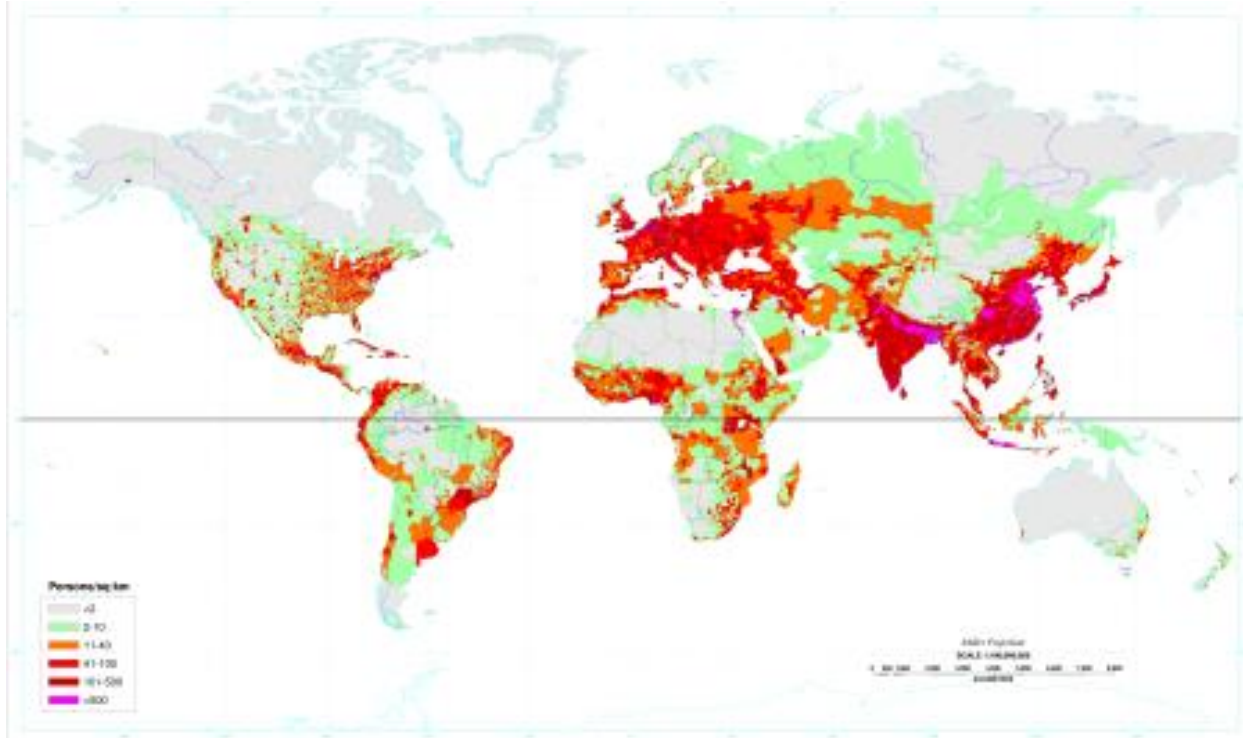


Image Credit: Nature Resources Conservation Service Soils, USDA

SPELL: DRAIN

SPELL: TRADITION

WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK FOREST BATHING..... HAPPINESS? DR QING LI

WHAT DOES SHINRIN-YOKU TRANSLATE TO? FOREST BATHING

WHICH COUNTRY HAS A VERY HIGH POPULATION DENSITY? JAPAN

WHAT KIND OF MEDICINE IS DR. LI AN EXPERT IN? FOREST

WHAT CAN WE ASSESS FROM THE POPULATION DENSITY OF AN AREA OR PLACE?

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Image Credit: Nature Resources Conservation Service Soils, USDA

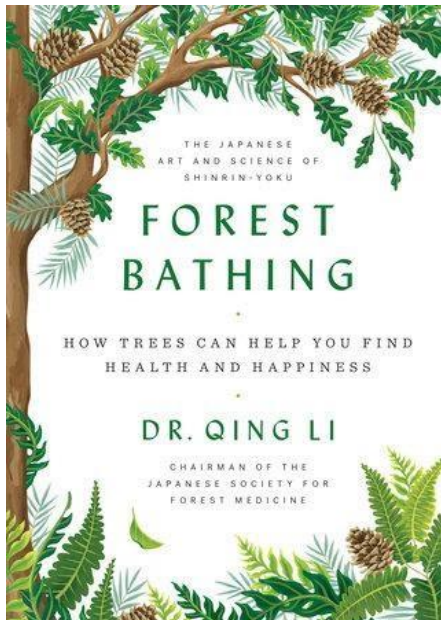


Image Credit: Amazon.com

Forest bathing is not hiking in nature, or walking in a city green space. These involve EXERTION, and getting from one end point to the other. Forest bathing is simply being in nature, connecting with it through our senses of SIGHT, HEARING, TASTE, SMELL and TOUCH. *Shinrin-yoku* is like a BRIDGE. By opening our senses, it BRIDGES the gap between US and the NATURAL WORLD.

SPELL: SHINRIN-YOKU

SPELL: WORLD

FOREST BATHING INVOLVES CONNECTING WITH NATURE THROUGH WHAT? SENSES

FOREST BATHING ACTS AS A \_\_\_\_\_ BETWEEN US AND THE NATURAL WORLD? BRIDGE

WHAT DOES FOREST BATHING **NOT** INVOLVE, BUT HIKING DOES? EXERTION  
**VAKT**

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Provide a set of leaves and bark, twigs, flowers that the student can explore, touch, smell, look at.

Forest bathing's impact on people's HEALTH has been the focus of numerous scientific studies. Data exists to support its benefits. Dr. Li provides a long list of peer-reviewed articles at the end of his book. Li is a MEDICAL doctor at the TOKYO's NIPPON MEDICAL SCHOOL, and has been a visiting fellow at STANFORD University School of Medicine.

SPELL: PEER

SPELL: TOKYO

WHAT DOES FOREST BATHING HAVE AN IMPACT ON? HEALTH

WHAT KIND OF DR. IS QING LI? MEDICAL

WHICH COLLEGE IN THE US IS HE A FELLOW? STANFORD

Forest bathing REDUCES stress, anxiety, depression, and anger. Essential tree oils, such as PHYTONCIDES found in forest air – very high in PINE and CYPRESS trees - increase ENERGY levels by more than 30 percent. There is improvement in SLEEP, a boost of the IMMUNE system and in CARDIOVASCULAR or heart health, and better PARASYMPATHETIC response (rest-and-recover). The health and emotional benefits are plentiful.

SPELL: HEALTH

SPELL: IMMUNE

WHAT IS THE CHEMICAL NAME FOR AN ESSENTIAL TREE OIL? PHYTONCIDES

WHAT KIND OF EMOTIONS DOES FB REDUCE? (STRESS, ANIXETY, DEPRESSION, ANGER)

BY HOW DOES OUR ENERGY LEVEL INCREASE WITH FOREST BATHING? 30%

EXTENDED VAKT

Here is Dr. Li's description of how to go about forest bathing. (Published in Time Magazine, source provided at the end of the lesson )

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Image Credit: Jooinn.com

First, find a spot. You could be in any green space that has trees– your backyard, school playground etc. “You will be walking aimlessly and slowly. Let your body be your guide. Listen to where it wants to take you. Follow your nose. And take your time. It doesn’t matter if you don’t get anywhere. You are not going anywhere. You are savoring the sounds, smells and sights of nature and letting the forest in.

The key to unlocking the power of the forest is in the five senses. Let nature enter through your ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands and feet. Listen to the birds singing and the breeze rustling in the leaves of the trees. Look at the different greens of the trees and the sunlight filtering through the branches. Smell the fragrance of the forest and breathe in the natural aromas of the earth and the trees. Taste the freshness of the air as you take deep breaths. Place your hands on the trunk of a tree. Dip your fingers or toes in a stream. Lie on the ground. Drink in the flavor of the forest and release your sense of joy and calm. This is your sixth sense, a state of mind. Now you have connected with nature. You have crossed the bridge to happiness.

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You can forest-bathe anywhere in the world – wherever there are trees; in hot weather or in cold; in rain, sunshine or snow. You don't even need a forest. Once you have learned how to do it, you can do *shinrin-yoku* anywhere – in a nearby park or in your garden. Look for a place where there are trees, and off you go!”

### Creative writing

YOU ARE ON A HIKE, AND STUMBLE ACROSS A GROUP OF PEOPLE ENGAGED IN FOREST BATHING. PRETEND YOU HAVE NEVER COME ACROSS THE TERM AND DESCRIBE SOME OF THE THINGS THESE PEOPLE ARE DOING. WRITE ABOUT YOUR RESPONSE TO THEIR ACTIONS.



The author, [Lakshmi Rao Sankar](#), lives in Brooklyn, has a dog named Obi, and is a passionate gardener. She loves reading. She loves second – hand book stores – the sensory experience of handling a physical book, smelling them, discovering the name of their previous owner on the flyleaf.

*The mission of I-ASC is to advance communication access for nonspeaking individuals globally through [training](#), [education](#), [advocacy](#) and [research](#). I-ASC supports all forms of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) with a focus on methods of spelling and typing. I-ASC currently offers [Practitioner training in Spelling to Communicate \(S2C\)](#) with the hope that other methods of AAC using spelling or typing will join our association*

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### Sources:

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