



SHINRIN YOKU: FOREST BATHING AMIDST DELHI'S RUSH

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Peace has become a rare commodity, much like clean air, due to Delhi's rapid development. Endless scrolling and constant pings on the phones pull the mind deeper into digital noise, leaving anxiety, stress, and a sense of lost peace. As John Muir once said, "In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." In such a world, Shinrin Yoku, the Japanese practice provides a peaceful break where people can relax and reconnect with nature, away from the pressures of daily. In the early 80s, recognizing the growing stresses of modern life, the Japanese government introduced Shinrin Yoku, a program encouraging people to connect with nature in the country's national parks for mental well-being. Shinrin means "forest" and Yoku means "bath." it's about immersing all the senses in the atmosphere of the forest. Shinrin Yoku encourages slow, mindful presence. Despite Delhi's rapid urbanization and bustling environment, the city is home to several green zones that offer much-needed escapes from the

chaos. These parks, gardens, and forests provide peaceful sanctuaries ideal for Shinrin Yoku (forest bathing):

- Aravali Biodiversity Park, Vasant Vihar
- Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary
- Deer Park
- Hauz Khas Forest
- Hauzrani City Forest
- Jahanpanah City Forest
- Lodhi Garden
- Okhla Bird Sanctuary
- Rajokri Forest
- Sanjay Van
- Yamuna Biodiversity Park
- Tughlakabad Biodiversity Park

Healing Power of Nature

Japanese studies have found that walking in a forest can greatly reduce cortisol levels. Trees exude phytoncides, natural substances with germ-fighting properties, that may support the immune system.

In 2009, a study in Japan by Dr. Qing Li and his team at Tokyo's Nippon Medical School investigated the effects of Shinrin Yoku (forest bathing) on immune function. Volunteers spent two days and one night in a forest, while another group stayed in an urban setting. The results showed that the forest group had a significant increase in natural killer (NK) cells—immune cells that fight infections and cancer. A study at Seoul National University in South Korea discovered that wandering through forests greatly enhanced mood and lowered stress. A study by the University of Essex in the UK showed that participants who walked in nature, especially forest environments, had improved memory, attention span, and mental clarity. A research conducted in the United States revealed that spending time in forested environments led to decreased blood pressure and reduced activity in the sympathetic nervous system. A 2017 study published in *Nature* found that being around trees can affect the amygdala—the part of the brain that handles emotions and stress—by supporting its structure and function.

A guide to forest bathing in Sanjay Van, Delhi

Wear Comfortable clothes and shoes . Turn off all the electronic devices. Begin the walk gently without any rush. Observe the environment and use all the five senses -

1. Sight: Observe the colors of the leaves, the form and size of the trees, and the birds around you.
2. Sound : Sound: Pay attention to the melody of the birds, the gentle crunch of twigs beneath your feet, and the hum of insects around you.
3. Smell - Breathe in the natural aromas around you, including the earthy fragrance of damp soil after rainfall (if rain has occurred).
4. Touch - Feel the rough texture of tree bark , hug the trees around , touch the flowers and fallen leaves.
5. Taste - The coolness of breath and air around. Find a quiet bench or spot under a tree. Sit for 10–15 minutes. Take a moment to ponder about your walk. Walk slowly back, carrying the serenity and freshness of nature with you.

Delhi's Need for Shinrin Yoku

The fast-paced nature of daily life offers minimal opportunities for rest or mental calm, leading to increased stress, exhaustion, and emotional drain. The lack of natural spaces to retreat to further intensifies this pressure. In a world where the demands of daily life often overshadow personal health, Shinrin yoku provides an opportunity to re-engage with the natural world and escape the overwhelming urban chaos. By immersing in the calming presence of trees and greenery, residents can experience a break from the relentless demands of city life, helping to restore both mental and physical health. This routine fosters a stronger bond with nature, something especially valuable in a city with finite green areas. It's an opportunity to slow down, breathe deeply, and find balance amidst the chaos.

References

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