

10 Ways to Relax in Nature and Stress Less



The way you spend time out in nature can affect how much your physical, emotional and mental health will benefit from it. If you're getting outside to relax, relieve stress or anxiety, focus your mind, or improve your health and well-being, try some of these tips to make it a more mindful experience.

There are undeniable benefits for your mental health when you spend time in nature, like lower stress and better memory.¹ But if you're usually glued to a screen – computer, TV, or any other kind – you may have forgotten exactly how relaxing in nature works. Don't give up, hug a tree or two, and head for home. There are plenty of other ways to immerse yourself in nature and have fun while you're doing it.

Here are 10 relaxing nature activities that will rejuvenate your mind, from the simple to the life-changing.

1) Savor the Scenery: Movies beaming with CGI on 4K televisions dazzle our imaginations, but you won't always find the most mind-blowing spectacles on a screen. When was the last time you got up early to watch the sunrise, or ventured to the nearest hilltop to watch it set? The scenery will mentally prepare you for the morning or help you de-stress after a busy day so you're ready for the night.²

2) Wander the Wilderness: Walking is good for you, but not all walks are created equal. Cruising the urban streets doesn't provide the same mental boost as hiking a local trail or feeling the sandy beach between your toes. You don't have to have a specific destination in mind, either – your goal isn't to hike X miles, but to aimlessly immerse yourself in the natural world around you.³ The Japanese call this "forest bathing" and it can rejuvenate a weary mind.⁴

3) Meditate on the Music: And not the kind playing in your headphones. Leave your electronics behind and listen to the melodies nature has to offer: babbling brooks, bird songs, wind whistling through the trees and the scurrying of unseen animals through the canopy. It's a lot more relaxing than the honking horns and text message alerts you're used to, and it offers the opportunity to practice some meditative mindfulness in your tranquil surroundings.⁵

4) Pose in Paradise: Yoga offers many physical benefits, like stretching the body and building core strength. It relaxes you, too, but if you surround yourself with nature's beauty, research shows you might up the flow of endorphins and take your yoga session to whole new levels.⁶ So try skipping the gym and make a park with a view your yoga studio.

5) Study in the Sunshine: If you have studying to do, or written material to ingest, leave the fluorescent lights behind and read in the light of the blue sky overhead. Natural environments can enhance cognitive abilities, like memory and problem solving.⁷ So if you want to retain more information for that big test at school or figure out how to win that important account at work, you might have a better shot surrounded by birds and trees than fellow students and chatty coworkers.

6) Pack a Picnic: Load a basket with your favorite healthy goodies and have lunch among the flora and fauna. Bring some companions along – a picnic is the perfect way to spend quality time with friends and family without the distractions of the modern-day world. And, nature makes socializing with other people easier, so it's the perfect place to build stronger relationships with those you love.⁸

7) Sleep Beneath the Stars: Now you're getting serious. Why not disconnect entirely for a couple of days and make nature your home? Camping lets you get further away than a simple day trip allows. (And maybe out of cell phone range. Forget Fear of Missing Out and try the Joy of Missing Out instead. #JOMO!) If roughing it isn't your style, consider glamping, where you can maintain some of the creature comforts you love but still be away from it all.⁹ Just leave the high tech at home.

8) Simmer in a Spring: Hot springs have been shown to have healing effects on the body and mind, so traveling to one of nature's Jacuzzis is a great way to connect with the outdoors and soothe your soul.¹⁰ It's not rocket science, either; even animals have figured it out. Snow monkeys in Japan seek springs to warm up and relieve stress in wintertime.¹¹

9) Begin a Bucket List: If the beauty of the forest or the crash of waves on the beach blew you away, there's a lot more out there for you to explore. The colors of the Aurora Borealis, the heights of Kilimanjaro, the depths of the Grand Canyon. Make a list of the Natural Wonders you want to see, and plan how you'll start crossing them off, one by one.¹² Not only will the sight of these wonders leave you relaxed, you'll be awe-inspired.

10) Opt for an Outdoor Office: If you've been thinking of a career change anyway, consider a role where four walls aren't part of your nine-to-five. There are plenty of jobs that let you work outside all day long, like park rangers, farmers, adventure guides and environmental scientists.¹³ So if you feel like your current lifestyle isn't offering up the opportunities to connect with the natural world you so love, consider making the outdoors your daily office.

It's great to get out and #movemore outside, but make sure you #relaxmore, too.

- Start small by scheduling time with a friend to try one of the first three ideas. (They're easy!)
- Then, plan a bigger trip with your companions-in-nature to go on a picnic or even a camping trip as the outdoors become a bigger part of your life.

Now take a deep, calming breath in nature, so you can be healthy for good!

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/10-ways-to-relax-in-nature-and-stress-less>