

How walking in nature can help wellbeing

Going on a walk can revive us. Whether we explore quiet forests, look out over a rugged headland towards the sea or stroll around our favourite park, spending time in nature can give us a sense of peace.

For many of us, walking has become even more important for our wellbeing during the pandemic. Experts from the National Trust's partner Cotswold Outdoor and their own rangers share their thoughts on why walking in nature means so much.

Walking keeps our bodies and minds healthy, giving us a breather from the stresses of daily life and the space to gather our thoughts. Exploring open countryside also brings us closer to nature, giving us time to notice how the raindrops cling to a spider's web or listen to the wind in the trees.

How does walking in nature make you feel?

Each of us will take away something different from the green spaces and coastal landscapes we explore, whether that's spotting an owl flying silently between the trees or sharing the beauty of a sea view with a loved one.

'Walking gives me the chance to see new places or revisit the ones that have special memories. It lets me escape my daily life, and share experiences with people I love', says Anna Jones from Cotswold Outdoor.

Gardens, parks, woodlands and rivers have been places of comfort and solace for many of us during the coronavirus pandemic.

According to The People and Nature Survey, led by Natural England, almost nine in 10 adults in England said that being in nature made them very happy. And four in 10 adults said

they were spending more time in nature than before the coronavirus pandemic, with health and wellbeing cited as one of the main reasons for getting outside. Other key reasons for visiting natural spaces were for fresh air and to connect with wildlife and nature.

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– Anna Jones, *Cotswold Outdoor*

Everyone needs nature

Everyone needs nature and the calm it brings. Be still in a fast-paced world when you connect with the places that will always be there to welcome you back – expansive woodlands, calming gardens and the lengthy coastline with its rushing waves and endless skies.

Healing spaces full of wildlife

Walking allows us to discover peaceful places, where we can take a moment to listen to the birds, feel the breeze on our face or watch the sun filtering through the trees.

Spending time in nature can actually reduce anxiety and depression, according to the Nature and mental health report produced by mental health charity Mind. It also states that being outside in natural light can lift a person’s mood, especially during the winter.

A lasting connection

Overlooked by the lush slopes of Devil’s Dyke in West Sussex, Saddlescombe Farm and Newtimber Hill is a special place to take some time out.

Graham Wellfare, area ranger, says: ‘The hustle and bustle of Brighton is only a few miles away but the farm is such a tranquil place. As soon as people arrive they breathe a sense of relief and they take that sense of peace back with them.’

“People can simply listen to the sound of the birds or notice how the raindrops cling to a spider’s web.”

– Louise Buckley, a ranger at Saddlescombe Farm

The healing power of the coast

Walking along rugged coastal headlands and listening to the sea smashing against the rocks is hard to beat. For many of us the reasons we love coastal places runs deeper than simply enjoying the scenery and taking in the fresh air.

Being by the sea can lift our mood, help us sleep and make us feel relaxed, according to a survey of 109 walkers carried out as part of our previous Great British Walk campaign.

- Nearly two-thirds of people said that a coastal walk allows them a distraction from the stresses of everyday life and over half said a coastal walk makes them feel positive about their lives in general.
- Coastal walkers were more likely than inland walkers to get a better and longer sleep following their walk but both groups reported benefits to sleep and mood.

The research also showed that walking by the coast can reconnect us with memories of childhood, family and friends and going on holiday. Being by the sea can also help us reflect and think things through.

Caring for the places that make a difference

As the National Trust’s walking partner, Cotswold Outdoor is supporting them to look after coast and countryside, which means you will always have special places to escape to.

Please click [here](#) for more information.