



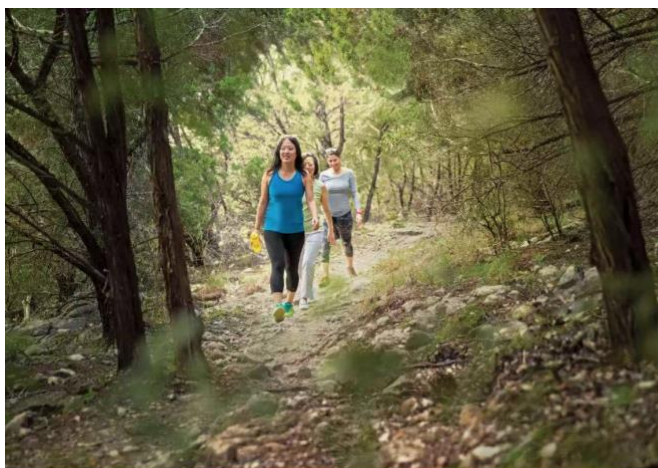
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PHOTO: Lake Austin Spa and Resort

## No, it's not about getting naked in the woods.

When you first hear about forest bathing, a few things come to mind. Could that really be a thing? It just sounds a little too ridiculous to be true. What does forest bathing involve? Would I be standing naked in a forest? Would it have to be raining to get the full effect? Is hugging trees or yelling into the abyss part of the ritual?

Thankfully, it's none of the above. It's an actual therapeutic practice that was created by the Japanese government in 1982—it's said to have its roots in ancient Shinto and Buddhist practices—that inspires people to get outside and spend time, even for a short while, in any green space, forested or not. Documented health benefits have included lower blood pressure, lower blood glucose levels, and lower stress hormones.



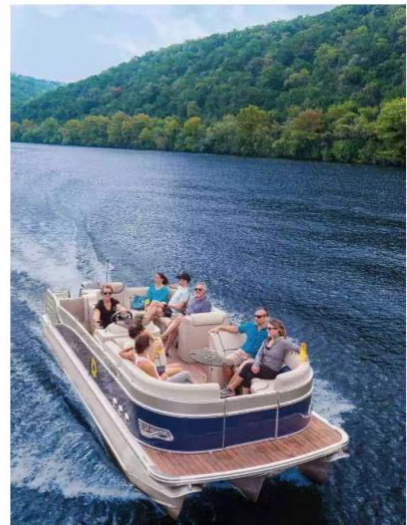
**“Be present. Be mindful. Be three dimensional.”**

On a recent trip to [Lake Austin Spa Resort](#), I got to experience forest bathing for myself. The spa offers a two-hour nature hike (some might call it a lovely meander through the woods) through the Commons Ford Park that includes at least 10

minutes of quiet time and culminates with a standing yoga session overlooking the soothing waters of Lake Austin. The journey’s aim is for guests to look, listen, and feel the experience of being in nature. I was told to “Be present. Be mindful. Be three dimensional.” And did I mention that electronics aren’t allowed on the hike? That can be a hard task for people in today’s day and age, but it was easier than you might think. And it was quite lovely to just turn everything off and tune everything but nature out.

“Every time we are outdoors, we are forest bathing,” says Cindy Present, Fitness and Activities Director at Lake Austin Spa Resort, who has lived on the lake her entire life.

“However, by calling this hike a forest bathing hike, we are setting the purpose of the hike and giving our guests the tools to be more mindful, intentional, and present in their experience. With the fast pace of daily life, the constant tug of technology and the obsessive desire to ‘post and share,’ the intent of this hike is to coach our guests to have a three dimensional sensory experience and look, listen, and feel their way through the hill country trails—that will ultimately carry over to the rest of their day and hopefully, how they are walking through life.”





Alexis Kelly; Alexis Kelly; Lake Austin Spa Resort

Present certainly practices what she preaches; she uses a Stand-Up Paddleboard to get to and from work on Lake Austin. She says of her commute, "It helps me clear my mind and gives me time for myself so I am ready and present for the day ahead." Smart lady.

So, whether you have the incredible fortune of spending some time at the Lake Austin Spa Resort (which I highly recommend), or you're able to grab a few moments and head to the nearest green space (which I also highly recommend), there's no doubt that "forest bathing" will help you clear your mind and prepare you for the day or task at hand.



