



Skamania Lodge®

Self-Guided Forest Bathing Experience

CREEK LOOP TRAIL

ABOUT FLORA RUDOLPH

Flora's intense and open-hearted connection with trees over the past 15 years has been life changing, including helping her recover from a traumatic brain injury. In Flora's words: "Meeting trees and deepening my connections has become central as this is such a mind-boggling, heart-opening experience. Trees know us and what we need to be awake and vital....I am in awe of these experiences. It is such a joy to share this and to see others...feel this life-changing connection."

1131 SW SKAMANIA LODGE WAY
STEVENSON, WA 98648
509.427.7700 • 800.221.7117

SKAMANIA.COM

Thanks to Flora Rudolph for capturing this
forest bathing experience at Skamania.

*Visit MeetingTrees.com
and*

Skamania.com/ForestBathing

You will find the beginning of this experience along the Creek Loop Trail. To help you explore, there is a map on the back. As you begin your journey, we suggest water, a snack and a journal.

PRELUDE

The forest is resoundingly about connection and community, from the most microscopic interaction to the biggest tree, which houses multitudes, sharing its resources through root networks, and finally becoming a nurse log. The feeling of being in the forest, in the trees, is life-affirming and can be felt through our being. To experience our connection with another species and the earth – knowing that the same force that flows through trees flows through us – is home. It is presence.

By renewing your intimate connection with nature, you can recharge your vitality, encourage resolution, and have joy. We humans have always been deeply connected with trees. Trees have been our refuge, our community, our religious centers, our therapists, and our healers. They have been the place to bring our entreaties in hope of being blessed, bringing a vibrant, living connection between us, the earth, and all life forms. The oldest conifers have been here for about 350 million years.

In the mid-1980s in Japan, scientists began researching the differences in people who spent time in the forest rather than in constant urban settings. They found that we have built-in responses to both threats as well as to heart-opening peace, joy, and health which operate in different areas of our brains. During their studies, when people spent even a few minutes in the forest, their cortisol, blood pressure, and heart rates lowered, immune systems strengthened, and mood issues like anxiety, depression, and ADD decreased while dopamine and other feel-good chemicals increased.

Those who spent time in the trees regularly had greater and more sustained benefits as their brains' connections to health and feeling great increased. This time in the trees was named Forest Bathing and is a somatic, full sensory immersion in the energy of the woods.



[illegible]

"It is useless to worry. Savor each moment. Allow your energy to touch the ground and your personal boundaries to fade as you take in the vitality that is everywhere."
- Message from Willow



"...the plant could actually tell when the sound of running water was a recording and when it was real, and...the plant did not like the recorded sound."

*– Monica Gagliano, evolutionary ecologist
and author of Thus Spoke the Plant.*

1 FOCUS

Entering the forest is a magical experience. It is outside of our common daily agenda. Even if you just slowly walk into the trees with your phones turned off, you will be enriched. However, so much more is possible. To open to this possibility, turn off your phones or leave them behind and do not check messages or take photos. Go slowly. Let your mind relax as you let go of any thoughts. Focus on the movement of the leaf, the grass, the clouds, all of life that surrounds you. When you feel ready, walk to Area 2.

2 DEEP BREATHS

As you step into the forest, pause to take a few deep inhales and long exhales. No matter what you were doing before or planning to do after, you are here. Everything going on, noise, distractions, hot or cold, wet or dry, is part of being here right now, in the trees. Breathe deeply and exhale. Feel the tension drain out of your body. Breathe and exhale.

Notice the details that surround you. Look down and notice the earth. Look at the colors and textures. Look to each side and see the light on leaves. See the movement of the wind as it meets the branches and feel it on your skin.

Take in the sounds that are here with you. Look up to the sky and the tree-tops and pause to take it all in. Feel your feet connect and your body safely supported by the earth. At your own pace, move on to Area 3.

3 GET CLOSE

Inhale deeply and take in the forest smells. Let them fill your body. Get close to a big tree – this one is a cottonwood. Place your hands on it and lean in. Inhale deeply and enjoy. This is aromatherapy at its source.

Notice the sensations you feel in your body. Pay attention to this as this is your experience before any mind chatter jumps in to interpret and distract you. Feel the gentleness and soothing effects from the cottonwood and exhale any needless tension. Take some time in this delicious moment before walking to Area 4.



4 STRETCH

Enjoy this expansive space and move into the experience of being right here. Bounce and feel the earth respond. Shake off excess energy and move your body in ways that feel right to you. Perhaps do a few stretches.

A simple movement to clear your energy is to bring your arms from your sides up over your head and slowly bring them down through the center of your body. Do this a few times. Breathe deeply and exhale. Feel your body in this space. If you feel any stress in your body, let it go. This time is for you.

Symbolically, leave your mind chatter and take a step forward into this experience. This is a shift of focus. Let your senses lead you. Pause and look at each life form that you see – a small bug crawling on a leaf, the vibrant flower next to you. Notice the details and exquisite and unique beauty of the forms, shapes, and lines. Look at the colors and textures. Feel the wind. If your mind starts to wander, simply watch the wind move through the branches, through the grass. This simple focus will bring you back to being here right now. Feel the wind on your skin welcoming and supporting you. Enjoy this connection. Go slowly so you can feel, see, hear, and smell. Savor the expansion of your awareness. As your senses are engaged, your body can relax, and your energy can shift.

Be silent. Your mind may not appreciate this, but do it anyway. Your mind will want you to think of other things and to pull you away from your time with the trees – but just let it go and allow your awareness to be here. When you are ready, move to Area 5.

5 CONNECT

This is such a happy spot. Pause and expand into this feeling. The forest is connected and aware. Just as the trees sense the life around them, the bugs, birds, sun, wind, and their neighbors, above and below ground, they sense us. It is so joyful to get this! Just as each of us has a different quality of energy, so does each tree, each species. Trees will “call” to you when they want to meet. This is experienced as a tree catching your attention.

When this happens, go to the tree to meet it. Leave your skepticism and shyness and bring your curiosity. Who is this being?

Continued



Although it is best to just meet your tree without labels, I think that it is helpful to realize some of the frequencies the trees in this forest convey. Each tree, each species, has its unique energy, yet the cumulative energy of this Skamania forest is of Douglas fir, being on task, serious and earthy; alder, a tree of flow, release of restrictions and quick connection; maple, welcoming and embracing, inclusive and creative; cottonwood and poplar, soothing and calming; birch, tree of joy and rebirth; hazel, full of mystery, healing, and magic. These and other species are present in this forest. At this spot, you can meet the two big and welcoming alders. If you have any pain or restrictive areas in your body or emotions, notice these and let alder energy help you release. Stay for a few minutes.

Go to the tree and place your hands on it, lean in, and deeply take in its fragrance. The smell can take you deeper. Look at and feel its bark and the forms that it makes with its branches and leaves. Notice its “view” and surroundings. Then just put your ideas aside and take in the energy of the tree. Stay and don’t pull back. Let the tree connect with your energy. Notice the sensations in your body. Do you feel grounded, spacey, consoled, joyful, calm, or anything else? Do you feel the energy move in your body? There is a pivotal shift when you feel the energy of the tree when you have met the tree. Body aches and issues may resolve from this energy, you may receive solutions, or you may simply feel peaceful, content, and happy. Whatever you experience is right. If you have more time, just sit here in silence and watch the forest come alive with you as part of it. When the moment feels right, walk to Area 6.



6 DEEPEN THE SENSES

This spot, from the bridge, calls to you to stop. Breathe and let go. Slowly, with your hands a few inches from your body, move your hands from your thighs up through your torso to above your head and back down. Intend to clear your energy. Do this a few times. Bounce and turn your body to shake off any excess. Look, hear, notice, and look deeper. Let your fully engaged senses take in the vitality. Appreciate what is offered to you. If you are urged to move your body, then do so. If your hearing or vision is very keen, go with it. Inhale deeply. At your body's pace, walk to Area 7.



7 HARMONY

Big Douglas fir! Pick the one that catches your attention and get close. Feel how this energy is different from the alder and the cottonwood and lean into it.

Connection is being in harmony with the wisdom – the knowing – that is within you and that flows through all forms. The moment of connection is when you and the tree are not separated by your mind, and you are with the tree. You let go of everything you know about the tree and experience the vital connection.

Douglas firs are on a task continuously cleaning the air and monitoring the rhythms of the earth. Their energy is very earthy, focused, and steadfast. Note what you experience when meeting it. We are in a synergistic relationship with trees. We breathe in the oxygen they release, and they breathe in our carbon dioxide. We eat tree fruits and nuts and some leaves that they offer. After thinking about these connections, walk to Area 8 when you are ready.

"All things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man... the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports."

– Chief Seattle

The pond. Joy, joy, and more joy. Alder energy dominates this spot and fills the air with vitality. Alder is in its element here, close to water where it thrives, and where its energy is most potent. It is easier to release heavy emotions and thoughts and to experience your freely flowing energy while surrounded by alder. Pause here and savor this place. Breathe and become still. Connect with an alder. Either put your hands and forehead on it and lean in or lean against it with your back.



Go deeper into all that surrounds you. Feel the movement of energy in your body. This is a result of connecting with the life around you that resonates with the life in you. Look to the movement on the lake, the vitality, and stillness that is present in this place. Take some time to be still and aware. Take some time. Sink into the quiet.

As you connect more fully, the spaciousness in you expands, allowing your joy to come forward. Joy is always here. It is just a slight movement of energy to allow the quiet, peaceful joy to fill you. Allow this experience to be and see where it takes you. If you have a journal and want to write or draw, do so. Stay in connected silence.

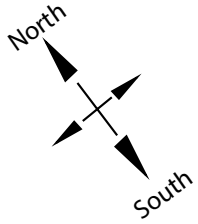
When you feel complete, either return on the same path, and deepen your experience at each spot; or continue on the second half of the Creek Trail to explore new terrain.

Continue to deepen into the life that is here in the forest and welcome what comes to you from these trees.

The more you explore, the more trees reveal. This journey has no end. When you are away from this beautiful place, know that you can meet the trees in your yard, on your street, or neighborhood parks. Just a few moments of connection and you will be restored to a centered, grounded presence and, like the Douglas fir, carry on with the business of living.



Mapping Your Forest Bathing Journey



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|---|--|
|  Creek Loop Trail |  Creek Loop Trail Trailhead |
|  Lake Loop Trail |  Lake Loop Trail Trailhead |
|  Gorge Loop Fitness Trail |  Gorge Loop Fitness Trail Trailhead |
| |  Fitness Stations |
| |  Tree Houses |



Point your smartphone camera at the QR code to visit our website and learn more about Flora Rudolph and our Forest Bathing program.