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## Forest bathing in the Loire Valley – Meanderings through France n° 233

July 22, 2021 | 1:05 am | Annick Dournes & Frederic De Poligny

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Private-tree-house-at-Loire-Valley-Lodges-

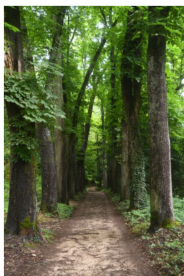
Known as “shinrin-yoku” in Japan where health authorities have acknowledged its benefits since the 1980’s, forest bathing is getting more and more popular in the West. The huge forests of the Loire Valley offer great places and opportunities to take up this relaxation method. For a complete immersion stay at “Loire Valley Lodges” a new hotel offering luxury tree houses in a private forest.



Take-time-to-admire-Nature

### Why give a chance to forest bathing?

Who could deny that our lives are getting more and more stressful, especially since Covid-19 has emerged. We all have seen pictures of people hugging trees and they may sound funny if not ridiculous... But you don’t have to go that far to enjoy the benefits of forest bathing... Switch off your mobile phone, don’t take photos or listen to music, these could distract you from your own sensations. Just go for a walk and disconnect from air, noise and visual pollution, focus your attention on the forest’s sounds, smells and colours. Walk or sit down on the ground and get aware of the wind blowing through the trees, birds singing, branches crackling or brooks babbling... Breathe deeply and inhale all the odorous essential oils produced by the plants surrounding you, especially trees that are believed to communicate with one another through these volatile substances. You can practice alone or in a group but try to keep silent.



Go-for-a-forest-walk

scientists have disputed his claims thousands of people say they enjoy benefits from forest bathing. Relaxation, better sleep, mood or concentration, decrease in heart rate and blood pressure, are the main benefits you can expect. A 30-minute walk two to four times a week is enough to feel better. Some will say that this is just another exotic trendy method but it could also allow us to get back to our Celtic roots. Shinrin-yoku is no miracle cure but it can help and if you are sceptical you can still enjoy a nice walk in the wood, can't you?



*Impressive-oak-trees-in-their-pound-at-Loire-Valley-Lodges*

### **Forest bathing in the Loire Valley**

If you're feeling too far from your nature roots the vast forests of the Loire Valley offer a wide range of experiences to reconnect to Mother Nature. Bare foot walk, relaxation, Land Art, creative Art & Craft, cooking and tasting trees... and of course forest bathing. Why not take advantage of your tour in Touraine visiting its wonderful chateaux to enjoy a peaceful interlude immersing yourself in the woods. There are many marked trails and cycle tracks of different lengths and for all levels. There are also guided thematic strolls with painting lessons, botanical discoveries, amusement labyrinths... by late august and all through autumn the undergrowth becomes a real "pantry" filled with mushrooms. Discovery tours are organised to help you recognize edible species, fill your basket and cook your picking. Simple authentic pleasures!

More at: [www.touraineloirevalley.co.uk/discover/freewheeling/](http://www.touraineloirevalley.co.uk/discover/freewheeling/)



*Your-tree-house-at-Loire-Valley-Lodges*

### **A feel-good stay at "Loire Valley Lodges"**

Fifteen years ago when Anne Caroline Frey bought a 300-hectare forest with a little stone house hidden under the trees she had a busy life in Paris and was far from imagining that she would create here one of the most original hotels of the Loire Valley. Eighteen lodges have been built scattered in the forest, 4 metres (13 feet) above ground (except for one set on ground level to welcome the disabled).



*Your-bedroom-lost-in-forest*

The lodges are far from the usual tree houses built for kids' entertainment. They are not built on trees but are perched on high stilts among the trees. Don't expect a rustic decoration. Anne Caroline Frey who worked for years in contemporary-art spheres has dedicated each lodge to a different contemporary artist such as Charlotte Perrot, Cedric Puchet, Zou... one is even

the king size bed or from the jacuzzi set on the big outside terrace you feel disconnected at once. The lodges have been built far from one another and you quickly get the feeling that you are the only human beings around. No TV, no internet, no mobile phone...



*A-hot-jacuzzi-waits-you-on-your-tree-house-huge-balcony*

The ancient stone house now is the hotel lobby (wifi is available here) and a beautiful swimming pool, a restaurant and bar have been built next to it. Breakfast is delivered every morning at the foot of your lodge and you have to pull on a rope to lift your breakfast basket up to the terrace. The private forest is quite big and bicycles are available in the lobby area free of charge to help you discover the tracks going through the woods. Monumental contemporary artworks are scattered along the way surprisingly perfectly fitting among the trees. However one of the most spectacular "artwork" is totally natural: five huge dead oak trees stand in the middle of a pond creating a mix feeling of admiration and awe.



*Tempting-swimming-pool-at-Loire-Valley-Lodges*

Forest bathing is one of the key experiences at the "Loire Valley Lodges". Anne Caroline Frey or one of the organizers take guests on 3-hour tours in the forest to experiment relaxation, barefoot walking, meditation... or simply look at the sky through the foliage lying on the back. The hotel also proposes a wide range of massages done on the outside terrace of your lodge. The restaurant comes as a bit of a disappointment. If the lodges, the forest and the artworks offer a great stay the food is far from being at the same level. The hotel is only a 30-minute drive from Tours, capital city of Touraine, where you will easily find a nice restaurant for your dinner.

Booking and more at: <https://loirevalleylodges.com/> (only in French). And be aware, strictly no kids under 14 at Loire Valley Lodges for understandable security reasons.

**Text ©Annick Dournes**

**Photos: ©Frederic de Poligny or ©Annick Dournes**



*Contemporary-artworks-are-scattered-all-over*



*Another-huge-artwork-at-Loire-Valley-Lodges*