



## Shinrin-yoku Q&A Sheet

### Who is Mayu Kataoka?

I am a nature photographer and a qualified 'Forest Therapy Guide' (Certified in Japan). I was born in Japan and moved to Sydney in 2002.

### What is "Forest-Therapy Guide?"

A Forest Therapy Guide is a trained professional who can assist, provide advice and conduct therapeutic & mindfulness activities for an individual's well-being through designed activities out in natural environments.

### Why did you want to become a Forest-Therapy Guide ?

Over the past 10 years the path of my "trees & nature" photography has led me to this new career as a "Forest Therapy Guide". I really believe that nature knew the reason as to why I have been so involved with tree photography. During this period, nature has been talking to me through a multitude of experiences, sights, sounds, touch and the scent of the forest. Nature has taught me so much and I believe she chose me for this new career, for which I am so grateful.

I would like to share this wonderful, nature's own therapy, to many people so I can help and assist their well-being and most importantly, let the world know the importance of maintaining a good relationship with nature.

### What is "Shinrin-yoku (Forest-Bathing)?"

Shinrin-yoku is the Japanese word, translated in English as "Forest Bathing". It is the practice of walking slowly in nature, purposely using our 5 senses to gain ultimate health benefits from nature.

### Is Shinrin-yoku same as Bush Walking?

No, it is not the same. The focus of a Bush Walk is "walking", whereas the focus of Shinrin-yoku is "Connecting and Feeling".

With the Bush Walk, the "walk" is the purpose of the event. You can enjoy the surroundings however your main focus is walking, nature is your external world.

With Shinrin-yoku, your focus is to develop your curiosity of nature and discover something new.

Using and maximizing your 5 senses. to see, listen, touch, smell and taste.

By mindfully and purposely connecting with nature will give you many health benefits and a sense of calm, and that is the aim of doing Shinrin-yoku.

### What are the benefits of Shinrin-yoku?

The benefits of Shinrin-yoku are countless. These are the major benefits which has been proved by scientists after many tests conducted in Japan.

- \* Improves immune system by increasing NK (Natural Killer) Cell which is known as fight against chronic diseases or other stress-caused illness
- \* Reduced anxiety
- \* Lower Stress Levels and Blood Pressure
- \* Improved the quality of sleep
- \* Increased physiological factors like relaxation and focus.

### **What kind of activities do we do in Shinrin-yoku?**

The activities are very simple. For example, Deep Breathing, laying down on grass and looking up trees/sky, Yoga, Stretching, and Tai Chi breathing exercises.

With my Shinrin-yoku, I offer Tai Chi breathing exercises as a one of main activities. One important aspect of learning Tai Chi is the awareness gained from slow movements and its concepts that originated from nature. All Tai Chi movements represent the movements of universe.

Tai Chi has provided me with a deep insight and supported me to effortlessly connect with nature. The concept of "move slowly" matches with the concept of Shinrin-yoku "Walk slowly". Tai Chi is an excellent way for all people to feel the connection with nature.

### **How long does Shinri-yoku take to ?**

It takes 2.5 hours to 3 hours, including the tea ceremony at the end of the session. I provide 4 to 5 different activities during the time and each activity takes 15 to 20min. Again, the walking is not the purpose of Shinrin-yoku, staying at one place for different activities are encouraged too.

### **How strenuous is Shinrin-yoku? Who can join Shinrin-yoku?**

Shinrin-yoku is suitable for all ages and it doesn't require high level of fitness, however you require a similar physical fitness level as you would for walking.

Some Shinrin-yoku venues, usually bush walking track have a few 'ups and downs'.

### **What is the purpose to use Yoga Mat for Shinrin-yoku?**

We will lay down on grass or ground and look up at the sky and trees ! Making sure that you feel comfortable through the process.

### **Where can I do Shinrin-yoku?**

You can do Shinrin-yoku at place where there is a nature. Going to a nice forest is an ideal but that is not always possible for everyone so you can go to some parks where you can sit under the tree or wooden bench, just to be there to have a peaceful moment listening to birds, feeling the sun or just watching trees and plants. Immersing yourself in the green forest colours that surround you relaxes your mind.