

Your Green Escape Plan

"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order" John Burroughs



Touch Base

- Sit quietly on a bench with a flask of tea and take in the sights, smells and sounds
- Look up at the night sky and search for star constellations (Orion's Belt or The Plough?)
- Find your favourite spot in the park. How does it make you feel? Revisit this spot several times and watch it change
- Watch the clouds form patterns in the sky, let your mind relax and wander
- Write a poem, draw or take a picture of a local green space or notable tree
- Pick up leaves, sticks, rocks, snow – is it rough? smooth? cold? crunchy?
- Write down how nature makes you feel
- Listen to natural sounds like rainfall or ocean waves. If you can't get out, play an internet recording or use an app.

Great Escapes

- Walk the River Avon heritage trail from Avonbridge to Linlithgow Bridge. Find a cave where William Wallace hid from the army of Edward I after the battle of Falkirk in 1298
- Take a walk around Almondell & Calderwood Country Park, collect some twigs, ivy and fallen pine cones for home decorations (e.g. a twig star). If sat next to the radiator pine cones will open up
- Visit the Scottish Korean War Memorial, which contains 1,114 native trees, in memory of the fallen soldiers
- Collect your free orienteering map from Polkemmet, Beecraigs, or Almondell & Calderwood Country Park visitor centres and go explore
- Take your lunch to Almondvale park and follow the course of the River Almond
- Explore Harperrig reservoir and bird hide.



Nurture Nature

- Lichen are good indicators of clean air. Go hunting for lichen normally found on tree bark and rocks
- Feed the birds in your garden. Why not make your own fat ball for birds using lard, bird seed and nuts. Fill a coconut shell or coat a pine cone (hang them from a branch)
- Give wildlife a home, build a bug hotel using deadwood/straw see www.wildlifetrusts.org
- Find a beach (e.g. Blackness or Cramond). Listen to the waves or why not improve your environment and pick up litter along the way
- Get outside early and watch the sunrise
- Bring nature indoors with a houseplant
- Grow potted herbs or strawberries on your kitchen windowsill
- Volunteer and become a "Friend of Almondell & Calderwood" supporting tree planting, maintenance or conservation.

What is the link between health and nature?

Research suggests spending time in green spaces has been shown to benefit your mental and physical wellbeing. It is proven to help:

- Improve your mood
- Reduce feelings of stress
- Make you more active
- Improve your confidence and self esteem

This research also suggests that nature sounds or outdoor silence can reduce blood pressure and stress hormones.

How long should I spend outdoors in nature?

This isn't an easy question to answer.

However, many believe 20-30 minutes three times a week is thought to be beneficial.

Making this part of your everyday is essential to providing long term positive effects.

How can I overcome potential barriers such as pain or low energy?

Make small changes, doing things you will enjoy or find relaxing whilst paying attention to nature in your everyday life (read your book outside). Work with your highs and lows – consider what time of day you're likely to feel more energised.

How can I get the best out of the activities?

Practice mindful walking. Be present, notice how your feet feel on the ground. Count your breaths in time to your walking. Focus on one sense at a time: what do you hear, see, smell or feel?

Everyone working together



Visit [WestLothian.gov.uk](https://www.WestLothian.gov.uk) for information on local walks, cycle routes and nature reserves.



Visit [Ramblers.org.uk](https://www.Ramblers.org.uk) for information on "medal routes" these are local walks based on 15, 30 or 60 minute routes which can be done during your lunch time.



[Westlothianleisure.com](https://www.Westlothianleisure.com)—Ageing well West Lothian is available at all Xcite locations. Promotes healthy lifestyles for adults over 50 in West Lothian. Activities include: Fitness, Tai Chi, walking netball/football and walking groups.



[westspace.org.uk](https://www.westspace.org.uk): West Lothian's online source of mental health and wellbeing information.



[WoodlandTrust.org.uk](https://www.WoodlandTrust.org.uk) has a wealth of woodland that is accessible, with around 12 woods alone in the Livingston area.



[Scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](https://www.Scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk) has six local wildlife reserves in West Lothian including Addiewell Bing and Petershill.



[tcv.org.uk](https://www.tcv.org.uk)—The Conservation Volunteers links in with community groups including: Polbeth and West Calder Community Garden.



[Cyrenians.scot](https://www.Cyrenians.scot) OPAL (Older People, Active Lives) service helps people 60+ stay active, independent and connected.



[SAMH.org.uk](https://www.SAMH.org.uk) projects: The Changing Room for men (aged 30-64yrs) with Hibs/Hearts and the ALBA project for men/women to support fitness and mental health.

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