



## Fit For Sisters

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Columnist

### The gift of outdoor activity

The latest “happiest countries” index came out, and there is a lesson that came out of the top countries: It’s not lack of crime, the health or the wealth of these nations that makes for happiness. It’s a simple way of living — one that many in Central Oregon abide by. It’s looking out towards the mountains, feeling the call, and getting outside.

Being outside is a gift many take for granted. Being in the surroundings of nature, taking time away from life and opening up to a power greater than ourselves serves a deeper sense of being. It connects us to the essence of life. It makes a person feel good, and in turn makes a happier, more tranquil and content being.

Sweden, labeled as the seventh-happiest nation, scored one-third of all residents participating in outdoor activities weekly. In Nordic culture, there’s a sense of belonging to open spaces and nature. They hold regard to this with the accord that all land is citizen-accessible.

According to an Outdoor Foundation study, nearly half the U.S. population doesn’t participate in outdoor recreation, with only 18 percent of people getting out for physical activity at least once a week. This may sound foreign to a Central Oregonian, but it’s the reality of suburban life in many parts of our country. In fact, according to the University of Berkeley, the average American spends 93 percent of his or her time indoors.

Are the outdoors catalyst to happiness? The Japanese, a long-lived culture, believe so. They participate in an activity called “Shinrin Yoku” which translates to “forest bathing.” This phenomenon is actually justified with scientific research. Japanese medical doctor and researcher Qing Li has concluded spending time in a forest can reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and anger; strengthen the immune system; improve cardiovascular and metabolic health and boost overall well-being. He sums up his life’s research: “Wherever there are trees, we are healthier and happier.”

Human beings did not evolve indoors. There’s an innate wonder that nature evokes. It opens up the shades of our psyche; provides a new perspective. Nature can quiet the mind and enrich the spirit. The weather is shaping up for some long walks, hikes, and bike rides. Take in the view, breathe in the fresh air. Take our blessing of the natural world in its full value; it will do wonders for the mind, body, and spirit.

### COLLEGE: Students are adapting to disrupted education

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a place to live during trying times,” said Hernandez.

Hernandez is also taking extra time to focus on herself and her roommates, picking up yoga and painting.

“I have been focusing a lot on my own boundaries as well, realizing how I am affecting others by my own actions during this time,” she said.

Hernandez usually works as a river guide for Ouzel Outfitters based in Bend, but their season did not start up at the normal time due to COVID-19. Hernandez misses the river.

“I hope that our season starts later in the summer and I am curious to see how it all plays out,” she said.

*This is part one of a two-part series.*



PHOTO BY PROVIDED

Hogan Hernandez, who usually works as a rafting guide, misses the river.



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