



# Health Benefits of Travel



## Key Facts

- Nature and wellness tourism are popular. Travel medicine helps prevent risks and promotes well being.
- Travel can have lasting health benefits.
- More research is needed to learn how different types of travel affect health and which travelers benefit most.

This fact sheet was developed by ISTM President Gerard Flaherty in collaboration with the Digital Communications Committee.



Images courtesy of G. Flaherty.



### MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- Travel can reduce stress, interrupt routines and promote personal growth. Sharing trips with friends and family or meeting new people can strengthen bonds and increase joy.
- Exploring new cultures makes us more flexible and open-minded.<sup>1</sup>
- Travel can also offer a 'digital detox', which may help to prevent burnout at work.
- Mindful travel helps us stay present and enjoy each moment.
- Looking forward to travel can boost happiness and wellbeing.
- Improved mood and sleep can last for up to five weeks after returning from a trip.



### PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

- Some people eat healthier food while traveling. For example, the Mediterranean diet can lower the risk of heart disease.
- Trips to moderate altitudes can improve blood sugar and cholesterol levels. It may also help people with asthma to breathe better.<sup>2</sup>
- Using saunas or doing yoga on trips can help improve blood pressure and sleep quality.



### NATURE BASED TOURISM

- Nature based tourism encourages people to care about the environment.
- Spending time in woodland, or 'forest bathing', can lower blood pressure and boost the immune system. This is because we breathe in natural chemicals called phytoncides released by trees and plants.<sup>3</sup>
- Forest bathing also helps us be mindful, improves our mood, and reduces anxiety.



### TRAVEL THERAPY

- Travel medicine providers know how to spot and explain health risks for travelers.
- Many of them love to travel and can help you see the health benefits of travel. This can make you feel less worried and more excited about your trip.
- We should weigh the benefits of travel with our duty to protect the planet. Let's all aim to be healthy and responsible travelers.

#### REFERENCES

1. Flaherty GT, Steffen R, Leder K. Towards travel therapy: addressing the health benefits of international travel. J Travel Med. 2024 Jul 3:taae091.
2. Vinnikov D, Khafagy A, Blanc PD, Brimkulov N, Steinmaus C. High altitude alpine therapy and lung function in asthma: systematic review and meta analysis. ERJ Open Res 2016; 2:00097 2015.
3. Le Gear K, Carlin C, Flaherty GT. Deep roots: realising the public health benefits of exposure to forest environments. Adv Integr Med 2023; 10:86 8.



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