



Walking Gently Self-Guided Tour

Nature Speaks Through the Senses

The medicine wheel reminds us that we are not just minds walking through the world. We are made up of spirit, mind, body, and heart. When we walk gently and notice with all our senses, we nourish all parts of ourselves.

Reflect on:

- What do you see that awakens your mind?
- What do you hear that touches your heart?
- What do you smell or feel that grounds your body?
- What do you sense that stirs your spirit?

Prompts:

- Try viewing the forest from different angles (crouch low like a rabbit, or imagine seeing from the canopy like a bird). What changes when you shift your perspective?
- Which smells stand out to you? How do they make you feel?
- Notice how your body feels as you walk. Are you breathing differently? Thinking differently?

Did You Know?

- Greenery has a calming effect on the nervous system (green is the easiest colour for our eyes to process).
- Looking at nature, even through a window or photograph, has been shown to support healing and reduce stress. Hospital patients with views of nature often recover faster.
- Birdsong signals safety to the nervous system. When birds go quiet, our bodies may become more alert or anxious.
 - *Note: While songbirds soothe us, scavenger birds may signal danger or loss in ecological terms.*
- Forest smells like earth, leaves, and rain can lower stress and ground us in the moment.
- Touching bark, soil, or leaves can help us reconnect with our bodies and the present moment.
 - *Note: If you're unsure whether a plant is safe to touch, it's okay to admire it visually. Be especially mindful of stinging nettle or poison ivy.*





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This self-guided tour focuses on tuning into our senses and learning about the healing power of nature through a self-guided sensory walk.

Materials:

- Plants of the Seine Field Guide
- Curiosity
- Wonder

How Nature Helps Us Heal

- Being in forests or near water activates the parasympathetic nervous system—this is the body’s “rest and restore” mode. It helps the body slow down and recover from stress.
- Even short walks in nature can lower cortisol (the stress hormone), reduce heart rate, and lower blood pressure. These effects happen even if the walk isn’t especially enjoyable (like when it’s cold or rainy).
- Time in nature also supports brain function. It has been shown to:
 - Increase creativity by up to 50%
 - Improve focus and concentration
 - Help the brain solve problems and make connections more easily by lowering background stress

Instructions:

Choose a starting point along the Seine River trails to explore. As you walk the trails, use the **Plants of the Seine Field Guide** to learn about the plants that call this place home.

Deepen your experience by taking time to tune into your senses and reflect on the prompts provided.

