Onl y five per cent of Finland’s surface area is built. More than 70% of the surface area is forest and 10% water systems. No wonder that enjoying nature is great on a global scale in Finland: more than half of Finns visit summer houses regularly.

As much as 70% of the inhabitants of northern Finland annually visit the nation’s forests to trek or pick berries or mushrooms.

In principle, every Finn has access to a silent forest and a strip of shore where one can be in peace. Foreigners too have noticed this. Tourists seek a counterbalance to their everyday life in Finnish nature destinations. They want peace, quiet and opportunities for nature and aesthetic experiences.

This is difficult in the built urban environment. For example, as much as 75% of Europeans live in an urban environment. Tourists value original nature, clean environment and local culture.

The healing power of forests

Those suffering from noise and stress can find an escape in forests. It is proven that sylvan nature reduces stress and blood pressure. Finland offers an excellent opportunity for a change in lifestyle, and its path leads to the forest.

“Aesthetic experiences and the relaxing effect of a green environment lift the mood and help recover from stress.”
“Aesthetic experiences and the relaxing effect of a green environment lift your mood and help recover from stress,” claims Professor Liisa Tyrväinen of Natural Resources Institute Finland.

Ms. Liisa Tyrväinen has long studied the significance of forests as a producer of well-being. Forests have a great effect on people as a mental, cultural and experiential environment.

Air pollution and exposure to noise, in this order, are the biggest environmental problems for human health according to WHO, the World Health Organisation. Insufficient recovery from stress raises the blood pressure and increases the risk of diabetes.

Ms. Tyrväinen emphasises that particularly nature areas must be seen as a resource of health care for city dwellers. According to many studies, forest help recovery from stress.

The measurements and surveys were made with a test group of almost a hundred persons.

“According to studies, people experience strong experiences, a clean and beautiful environment, outings in nature, accommodation and sauna close to nature, silence and healthy forest products, such as berries, mushrooms, wild vegetables and game. A stressed person recovers quickly in nature. Recovery in a green zone is apparent after just 15 minutes!”

The health benefits of a green environment are evident.

Ms. Tyrväinen recommends consciously combining nature experiences and moving in nature with a holiday trip.

It helps recovery from the strains of everyday life. “One nature trip is not enough to heal, but it can be an impetus for a change in lifestyle.”

A nature trip to the Finnish forest offers a holistic health package. It includes multisensory nature experiences, a clean and beautiful environment, outings in nature, accommodation and sauna close to nature, silence and healthy forest products, such as berries, mushrooms, wild vegetables and game.

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF FORESTRY and its partners promote the well-being effects of moving in nature and provides visitors with good services, such as routes, stopovers, sign-posts, maps and information on Finland’s most magnificent nature destinations. www.visitfinland.com

THE ARTICLE is a part of Visit Finland’s and its partners’ series of publications on nature and well-being. Additional information: Kiti Häkkinen, Programme Manager, FinRelax programme, Visit Finland, tel. +358 (0)50 453 4720, kiti.hakkinen@visitfinland.com

The parasympathetic nervous system is most active in rest. From the effect of a parasympathetic impulse, the heart rate slows down and respiratory frequency is reduced. Being in the forest has a similar effect on the organs as yoga or meditation. The Finnish forest is a retreat.

People felt more vigorous and even more creative after being in the forest. Ms. Tyrväinen emphasises the aesthetics of nature. Stress is particularly removed by the experience of nature, an unbuilt, beautiful scenery and silence.

FOREST HECTARES PER INHABITANT IN THE WORLD Natural Resources, Canada, 2016

FOREST COVER PERCENTAGE BY COUNTRIES IN 2005.

The most forested countries in the world are Finland, Guyana, Surinam, French Guyana, Gabon, Belize and Gambia.

FOREST COVER PERCENTAGE IN EUROPE 2010

Finland is one of the most forested countries in the world. Over 70% of the country’s surface area is forest.