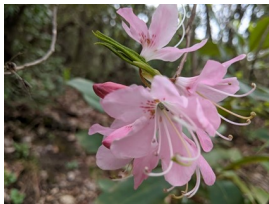


# Pinnacle Park

## Certified Forest Therapy Trail

### Self-guided Walk



Sylva, NC

# History of Pinnacle Park

Pinnacle Park is a popular 1,529 acre forest located on the Plott Balsam Mountain Range in Western North Carolina. The Park is owned by the Town of Sylva, and is a former watershed for the town. There is a conservation easement on the property that limits future use. The park extends from an elevation of 3,000 feet up to over 5,000 feet near Pinnacle Peak and Blackrock. The hiking trails include a lower elevation loop and are well maintained. Two streams, abundant wildflowers, a quiet location and openings to see the sky offer a setting that is perfect for forest therapy.

## What is forest therapy?

Forest therapy is a research-based framework for supporting healing and wellness through immersion in forests and other natural environments. Forest Therapy is inspired by the Japanese practice of Shinrin-Yoku, which translates to “forest bathing.” Studies have demonstrated a wide array of health benefits, especially in the cardiovascular and immune systems, and for stabilizing and improving mood and cognition.

Forest therapy can be experienced through a self-guided walk or with the help of a guide. The Pinnacle Park Certified Forest Therapy Trail provides the opportunity to experience forest therapy through a self-guided walk using the brochures provided. The brochure outlines five invitations you can use during your walk that will guide you through the forest therapy experience. The invitations open the door for you to experience nature through your senses. A walk can take as little or as much time as you prefer. Each invitation is just a starting point. Take your time, meander and enjoy being at Pinnacle Park. Take a deep breath, slow down and connect with nature.

The Pinnacle Park Trail is a certified Nature and Forest Therapy Trail by the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy and is the first in North Carolina. Learn more at [www.natureandforesttherapy.earth](http://www.natureandforesttherapy.earth).

The Pinnacle Park Certified Forest Therapy Trail is .45 miles and has 153 feet in elevation gain. You will follow the loop trail through the three sections returning to where you started. Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes and clothing appropriate for the season. Ticks, snakes and poison ivy are all present in the forest. You will likely not encounter any of them. As with any setting, just be aware of your surroundings. Let's get started!



### **Invitation one: Sensory awareness**

Starting in the parking lot, take the trail that goes to the right and follow it over the bridge and up the hill until you see a large boulder on the right (upper part of section 1). Stop here and meander down to the gently flowing creek. Stand by the creek or in the open area by the rock. This should take approximately 20 minutes.

Take a deep breath and exhale slowly. Close your eyes. If thoughts arise, let them go.

Focus on what you can hear nearby and far way. What sounds are around you? Are there any rhythms in the sounds? Be open to what feels right to you.

Breathing through your nose, what can you smell? Sniff around like a hound dog, inviting, noticing.

With your eyes still closed, hold your hands by your side with palms turned forward. Does the direction you are facing have a personality. Keeping aware of what is around you, slowly turn in a circle with your eyes still closed until you are facing the direction that feels right to you. Wait a moment and open your eyes. Look at what you are seeing as if this is the first time you have seen it.

If there is a gesture you would like to make toward what you are seeing feel free to do so.

## **Invitation Two: What's in motion**

For the next invitation, I invite you to take a slow walk. You will walk back up to the main trail and take a right. At the next fork in the trail, take a left and continue going uphill, crossing two bridges (section 2-3). Walk slowly and just notice what is around you taking time to touch, smell, and listen. Each step should be purposeful. Do this for approximately 20 minutes. When you are done, perhaps reflect on what you noticed.

## **Invitation Three: Tree**

Find a tree that you feel drawn to and go over to it. Just be in its presence. Thank it for what it offers to help the forest. How old is the tree? What wisdom might it have to offer? Imagine how its roots connect with other trees and plants. Touch the bark. Does the tree have a message for you? Would you like to offer any gratitude back to the tree?

## **Invitation Four: Sit spot**

Locate a spot where you would like to spend 20-30 minutes. It could be by the creek, off the trail in a secluded spot, or along the trail. Just enjoy being present in this place. Perhaps notice the many different colors, shadows, and scents that the forest offers.

## **Invitation Five: Water**

Along one of the creeks kneel down and touch the water. Notice how it feels. Perhaps you can focus on all the life that water brings and the life that is within it. Listen to the water. If you have a thought or a concern that you would like to set free, find a leaf or a stone and toss it into the water allowing the creek to carry it away.

