

# NATURE SPIRIT WALKS GUIDE CERTIFICATION

## SYLLABUS

### Description:

Spending time in nature makes people happier and healthier. A Nature Spirit Walk is a short, semi-structured hike led by a knowledgeable guide. Guides develop a basic understanding of the nature and natural history of their local environment while exploring spirituality in nature and mindfulness on the trail. They also learn to implement a structured-yet-flexible template for leading successful nature walks for diverse participants.

Why do we need Nature Spirit Walks? Due to the demands and realities of modern life, many families lack the time, money, or physical fitness to partake in traditional nature-bonding activities, such as lengthy multi-day camping or hiking trips. Yet, research shows that individuals suffer spiritually and physically when separated from nature. Conversely, time spent in nature—even small amounts—is associated with numerous positive health and life outcomes, in children and adults.

Nature Spirit Walks can be completed in as little as half an hour at minimal cost and physical exertion, while still providing an intensive and uplifting experiential and spiritual interaction with nature. The Guide facilitates the process by providing contextual information about local nature, identifying and interpreting key features (both planned and spontaneous), and leading specific mindfulness activities. As a semi-structured experience with a knowledgeable professional at the helm, Nature Spirit Walks reassure participants they can enjoy nature in safe, meaningful, and cost-effective way.

### Summary:

Nature therapy is becoming an increasingly popular (and scientifically-backed) modality for people seeking to improve overall well-being, and graduates should be well-positioned to meet that need. This 40-hour all-inclusive certification program (70-hours for the optional advanced track) can be completed fully online at your own pace (typically 1 to 6 months) and includes regular interaction and feedback with a qualified instructor. Successful graduation will result in certification as a Certified Nature Spirit Walks Guide through the prestigious Natural Wellness Academy, including a certificate.

### Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to construct and conduct a Nature Spirit Walk geared toward your local or target eco-region. As part of this, you will explain how and why time spent in nature improves wellness outcomes. You will understand why people are increasingly disconnected from nature and discuss how to reverse that trend. You will develop a basic technical understanding of the nature and natural history of your target region and learn how to share this knowledge with clients. You will explore spirituality of nature and master techniques for mindfulness on the trail. You will identify basic

interpretative techniques, safety measures, wildlife viewing skills, and marketing strategies. Finally, as a capstone, you will plan and implement your own Nature Spirit Walk.

### Benefits:

What makes Nature Spirit Walk different from similar programs?

- Flexible distance program can be completed on your own schedule
- Lowest tuition in the industry, with flexible payment options available
- Practical curriculum laser-focused on developing key skills needed to be a successful guide
- Multidimensional curriculum balances naturalism, spirituality, and practical skills
- Training individualized to your region, local nature, needs, and interests
- Certification expands business offerings and therapeutic toolkit for paraprofessionals

### Curriculum:

Module 1: Nature Therapy (2 hours)

1. Define “nature therapy” and the Guide’s non-clinical role in that process.
2. Summarize how and why nature walks are beneficial to people.
3. Discuss why people are spending less time in nature and how to remove those barriers.
4. List the aims and advantages of Nature Spirit Walks for fostering positive experiences in nature.

Module 2: Natural History (5 hours) *(+10 additional hours for optional advanced track)*

5. Identify your region’s biome and eco-region.
6. List your region’s important geologic, geomorphologic, hydrologic, or biogeographic features and their natural and cultural history.
7. Explain how all of the above influence your region’s characteristic modern flora and fauna.
8. Identify the region’s most common, characteristic, important, notable, or iconic trees, plants, birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, and/or fish.
9. Explain how the above influence the region’s culture and economy, including traditional goods, industry, and food.
10. List techniques for effective and respectful wildlife viewing.

Module 3: Spiritual Nature (5 hours) *(+10 additional hours for optional advanced track)*

11. Develop an individual definition of “spiritual” and discuss how nature can be incorporated into this concept.
12. Describe how to navigate multicultural beliefs regarding nature and spirituality.
13. Define “archetypes,” elaborate the utility of archetypes to Nature Spirit Walks, and list nature-specific examples of archetypes.
14. Discuss spiritual or cultural principles or beliefs associated with your region’s key flora and fauna, including interpretations from mythology, folklore, religion, tradition, or your own personal experiences or beliefs.

15. Describe spiritual associations with the geologic, geomorphologic, hydrologic, or biogeographic found in your region, including typical rocks and minerals.

Module 4: Practical Aspects (8 hours) (+10 additional hours for optional advanced track)

16. Describe interpretation and list interpretative techniques that can be used in Nature Spirit Walks.
17. Identify common natural hazards in your region and discuss risk management techniques for them, including participant briefing.
18. Explain how to utilize “Leave No Trace” principles in Nature Spirit Walks.
19. Locate and select appropriate settings to hold a Nature Spirit Walk.
20. Describe the “sales funnel” and how you can utilize it to attract participants.

Module 5: Nature Spirit Walk Template (10 hours)

21. Describe the Nature Spirit Walk Template, list its key features, and explain how the setup can translate into a positive experience for participants.
22. Develop specific Nature Spirit Walk activities.

Module 6: Practicum (10 hours)

23. Plan, design, conduct, and analyze a Nature Spirit Walk.

**Assignments:**

Each module includes an assignment (“learning experience”) featuring some combination of quiz questions, essay response questions, or small projects.

**Advanced Track:**

An optional advanced track is included with the course at no additional cost.\* The advanced track forces the student to grapple with concepts more in-depth and therefore requires a considerably higher time investment of the student. Advanced track learning experiences are listed at the end of Modules 2 through 4; students wishing to complete the advanced track should include responses to the advanced questions in their learning experience submissions for those modules. Students who do not wish to complete the advanced track do not need to respond to the advanced questions. Advanced track learners will receive a special designation on their graduation certificate.

*\*Students can complete the advanced track during their first run-through of the course for no additional cost. After graduation, a student who did not initially complete the advanced track will incur an additional tuition charge equivalent to a third of the course tuition if they wish to return to the course to complete the advanced track after they already graduated.*

**Materials Included:**

1. 6 Modules (printable)
2. *Nature Spirit Walks Tarot: 22 Sensory Activities to Enjoy in Nature* (printable PDF version included; discounted hard copy option available)
3. 5 Infographics (printable)

4. Nature Spirt Walk Template (printable)
5. Disclaimer Sample (printable)
6. Survey/Debriefing Sheet for Participants (printable)
7. Nature Yearbook Template (printable)
8. Business Card Template (printable; add your info)
9. Various Downloads
10. Certificate of Completion for graduates (printable)

#### Textbooks:

##### 1. Natural History

- a. You and your instructors will select one or more books or online resources that cover specific knowledge areas about your region. Knowledge areas include the geography; climate; geology; hydrology; flora; fauna; and relevant cultural history. The selection does not need to be geared towards technical specialists but should provide you with a good overview of the knowledge areas for your region. If you already have a resource in mind, you can provide suggestions to your instructor; otherwise, your instructor will work with you to identify appropriate resources. Your instructor must approve the final selection.
- b. As an example, past books have included:
  - i. Hawaii
    1. Frierson, Pamela. (2012). *The Burning Island: Myth and History in Volcano Country, Hawaii*. Trinity University Press: San Antonio.
  - ii. Southern Appalachians:
    1. Weidensaul, Scott. (2016). *Mountains of the Heart: A Natural History of the Appalachians*.
    2. Catlin, David. (1984). *A Naturalist's Blue Ridge Parkway*. University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville.
  - iii. Florida
    1. Larson, Ron. (1995). *Swamp Song: a natural history of Florida's swamps*. University Press of Florida: Gainesville.


##### 2. Spiritual Nature

- a. Your choice of:
  - i. *Animal Speak* by Ted Andrews
  - ii. *Nature Speak* by Ted Andrews
  - iii. Individual option selected with instructor

#### Upcoming Webinars:

*Note: Previous webinars will be available to students in the Webinars Library.*

- Identifying species
- Nature around the home (e.g. gardens, bird feeders)
- Finding trails
- Finding research articles related to your interests



**About the Instructors:**

**Cortney Cameron** holds a B.A. in earth and ocean sciences from Duke University, an M.S. in earth science from North Carolina Central University, where she was an NSF Graduate Research Fellow, and an M.B.A. from the Smartly Institute. She is a hydrogeologist working in water resources in the state of Florida. She was previously elected Secretary for the Southeastern Geological Society and is a member of the Religious Naturalist Association. She is the co-author of *Nature Spirit Walks Tarot* and the *Catians* comic book, author of the *Geologist in Love* poetry collection, and has published several creative and scientific presentations and publications.

**LindaJoy Rose, PhD** is a therapist, author, professional speaker, international trainer, and Academy founder with over 25 years of experience. The author of eight books, she contributes regularly to *The Huffington Post* and has frequently starred as a Healthy Living Expert on eHow.com and Tampa NBC affiliate Daytime TV. As a former director for the American Board of Hypnotherapy, she is a pioneer in subconscious dynamics and clinical hypnotherapy. She also spearheaded a healthy lifestyle retraining program with an Astra-Zeneca Foundation grant at one of the nation's largest clinics. Dr. Rose developed her practical and delicious eating philosophy to overcome a debilitating auto-immune disorder, which she combined with her background in psychology to launch the Academy's coaching program.