

# THE *The future* PATH *of* AHEAD

*life outdoors*

STAY INSIDE

OPT OUTSIDE



in collaboration with  
**FUTERRA**

*“In nature,  
nothing is perfect  
and everything is  
perfect.”*

ALICE WALKER

*Novelist and poet*





# INSIDE, DO YOU WANT TO BE OUTSIDE?

If you spend time in nature, odds are you'll see the importance of the outdoors. You'll feel the calming power of simply being outside, the connection to something bigger. And it's not surprising, because we used to spend our entire lives there. But unfortunately, today many of us are disconnected from our natural habitat.

The average American spends 95 percent of their life indoors.<sup>1</sup> As a result, we are becoming an indoor species, which comes with consequences. Our health and well-being may suffer. And the less we value our outdoor spaces, the less likely we are to protect them. It's a slippery slope.

The long march indoors is not inevitable. We are at a crossroads. Our decision now will dictate our future. Since 2015, more than 7 million people have chosen to #OptOutside on Black Friday with REI but that's just one step. This publication — The Path Ahead — presents trends that affect the future of life outdoors. The Path Ahead doesn't present all the answers. It's designed to provoke discussion by exploring nine 'brutal truths' juxtaposed with nine 'beautiful possibilities.'

Together, they paint a picture of what could happen if we stay inside as a species, or #OptOutside. It's time to choose.



► To watch the video, please download the PDF to your desktop or visit our [YouTube page](#)







*Today's kids  
risk becoming a*

**LOST**  
GENERATION

*instead of a*

**WILD**  
GENERATION



# LOST GENERATION

*Imagine kids who never see the sky* Today, kids spend less time outside than prison inmates, with the average child playing freely outside for just four to seven minutes a day.<sup>1</sup> But time outdoors is essential for children, contributing to their social, emotional, academic and physical development.<sup>2</sup>

The rise of technology, parental fears about traffic and stranger danger<sup>3</sup> and the loss of open spaces, are just some of the factors keeping children indoors.<sup>4</sup> Research shows that children are spending half as much time outside today as they did 20 years ago.<sup>5</sup>

But in trying to protect our kids, we may be harming them. Lack of time spent outdoors is linked to issues like anxiety, childhood obesity, academic underperformance and even bullying.<sup>6</sup> If we continue on this road, we're heading toward a generation that's unhealthier and unhappier.

Research has shown that if children don't develop a sense of respect and care for nature during their first few years, they're at risk of never developing such values.<sup>7</sup> Today, some kids would rather do chores or homework than spend time outdoors.<sup>8</sup>

We're in danger of raising a generation with no relationship with the outdoors – that's bad news for them and for nature.

“

**NO ONE**  
*will protect  
what they don't  
care about;  
and no one will  
care about what  
they have never  
experienced.”*

**SIR DAVID  
ATTENBOROUGH,**  
*Broadcaster and Naturalist*



**4<sup>to</sup> 7**

**minutes a day  
is the average  
time our kids  
spend playing  
outside<sup>9</sup>**

**40%**

**of school  
districts in the  
United States  
have reduced  
or eliminated  
recess<sup>10</sup>**







“  
Time in nature is  
not leisure time;  
it’s an essential  
investment in our  
children’s health.”

RICHARD LOUV,  
Author and Journalist

20  
MINUTES  
in a park can greatly  
reduce attention  
deficit symptoms in  
children<sup>18</sup>

# WILD GENERATION

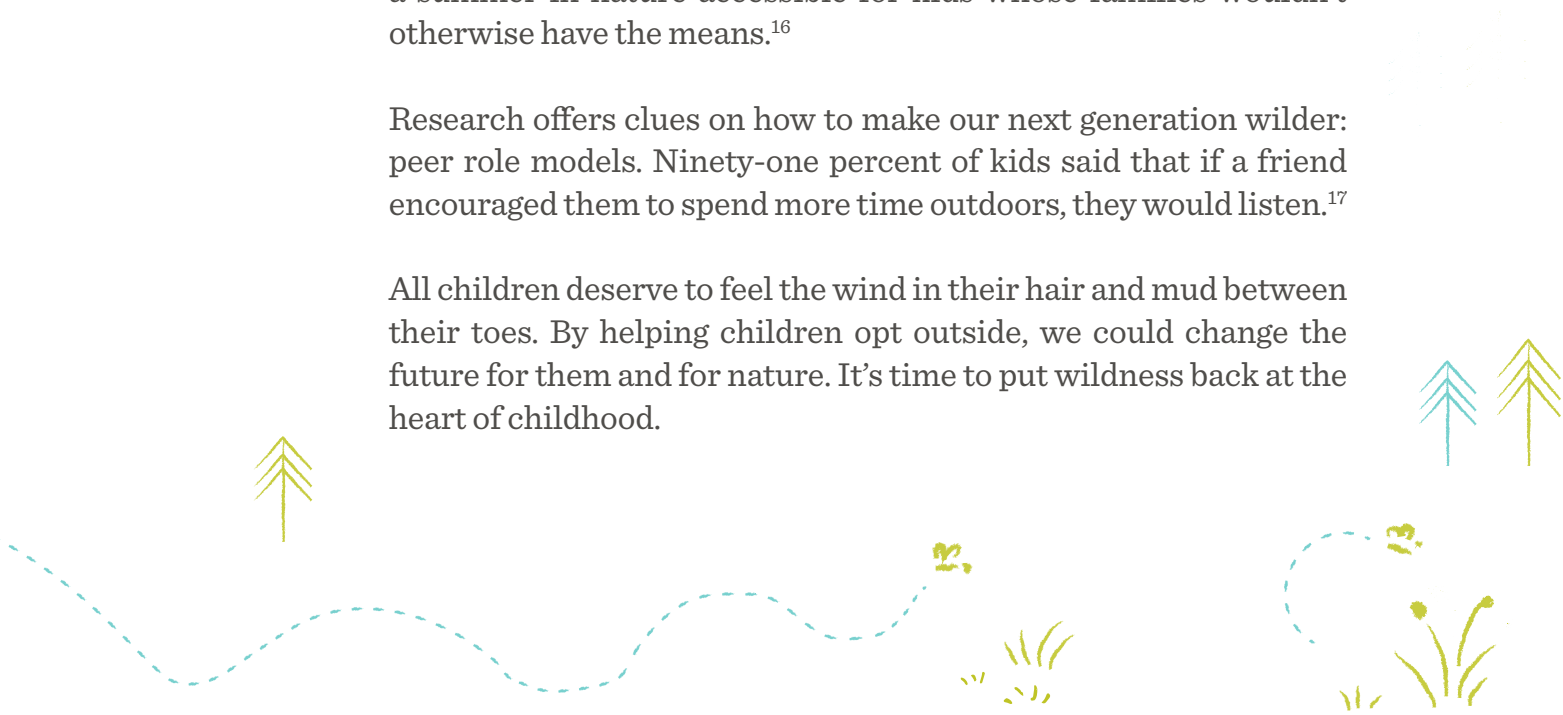
*Imagine every child playing outside* Nature stimulates imagination and creativity. It reduces stress and teaches children valuable life skills like self-reliance and self-responsibility. It also gets them physically active.<sup>11</sup> Imagine if we could make the outdoors part of every child’s life.

While the dominant trend right now is indoor playtime, the possibilities for improving a generation’s health and wellbeing through the outdoors are incredible. Spending time outside raises levels of Vitamin D, which protects children from bone problems and other health issues.<sup>12</sup> Plus, offering environmental education programs in school improves kids’ standardized test scores.<sup>13</sup>

Thankfully, some evidence suggests children are starting to head outdoors. At least two million people downloaded Every Kid in a Park passes,<sup>14</sup> which offer fourth graders and their families free access to hundreds of parks, lands and waters for a year. Forest Schools and outdoor preschools are also on the rise across America.<sup>15</sup> And there are new camps that make the freedom of a summer in nature accessible for kids whose families wouldn’t otherwise have the means.<sup>16</sup>

Research offers clues on how to make our next generation wilder: peer role models. Ninety-one percent of kids said that if a friend encouraged them to spend more time outdoors, they would listen.<sup>17</sup>

All children deserve to feel the wind in their hair and mud between their toes. By helping children opt outside, we could change the future for them and for nature. It’s time to put wildness back at the heart of childhood.





*We are becoming an*  
**INDOOR  
SPECIES**

*but  
what if we  
were* **FREE  
RANGE  
HUMANS?**



# INDOOR SPECIES

*Imagine the whole world indoors*

*As a species that evolved almost exclusively outside, our brains and bodies thrive when we're exposed to the elements. But on our long march indoors, we have unconsciously cut ourselves off from the outdoor world that we depend on.*

Modern humans survived outside for tens of thousands of years. But today, people spend just five percent of their day under the sky.<sup>1</sup> Without realizing it, we are becoming an indoor species.

A 2001 study, which followed the daily activities of people across the U.S., concluded that time outdoors is the most insignificant part of our days.<sup>2</sup> Over the years, we retreated indoors to environments we can control, building walls and roofs to separate ourselves from nature.

Fewer and fewer people now work outside. We exercise in air-conditioned gyms and ride in closed-off cars.

We spend so much time indoors, we've created what scientists call the "indoor biome"<sup>3</sup> – an environment enclosed within the walls we built. We understand little, however, about the health impacts of this man-made environment where we spend the majority of our lives.

The answer isn't to go back to living exclusively in the outdoors or away from civilization. We must find a new, contemporary relationship with nature. It's essential we find ways to reconnect with the outdoors we came from.

**WITHOUT  
REALIZING  
IT, WE ARE  
BECOMING  
AN INDOOR  
SPECIES**

# 95%

of our lives are spent indoors<sup>4</sup>

# “

We are bleeding at the roots because we are cut off from the earth and sun and stars.”

D.H. LAWRENCE,  
Novelist

*The “indoor biome” is now the size of France<sup>5</sup>*



OUTDOOR  
PARTICIPATION GREW  
LAST YEAR BY

1.6  
MILLION<sup>9</sup>

“

Wildness reminds  
us what it means to  
be human, what we  
are connected to  
rather than what we  
are separate from.”

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS,  
Author and Conservationist

FREE

*Imagine being as comfortable outside  
as you are inside*

*Imagine if we reworked our lives to  
incorporate more time outdoors and brought the outdoors into the  
places where we spend our days. Could we make spending daily time  
under the sky as normal as eating a balanced diet?*

This future starts with establishing what the  
right outdoor “diet” looks like. How much  
time *should* we be spending? What outdoor  
experiences *should* we be having? What is  
the correct dose and frequency we need for maximum impact?  
Once this is clear, let’s disseminate the information widely. That  
way, the outdoor industry, health providers, educators, employers  
and policy makers can embed the outdoors into our schedules, our  
workplaces, our policies, our cities and our culture.

RANGE

HUMANS

We see glimmers of hope that the tide  
could turn. From 2015 to 2016, 1.6 million  
more people in the U.S. participated  
in an outdoor activity.<sup>6</sup> And National Park visits are strong, with  
multiple parks setting attendance records in 2016.<sup>7</sup>

There are other positive signs. It’s now totally normal to schedule  
walking meetings instead of sitting at desks or plan conferences  
and work retreats in places that resemble adult summer camps.  
The rewilding movement is well under way in our cities too,  
with more places integrating nature seamlessly into the built  
environment through urban design.

We *can* reconnect to our natural environment by making the  
outdoors a part of our everyday lives. And that can only be a good  
thing for a species that evolved almost exclusively outdoors.

*The most popular  
Airbnb globally  
is a tree house in  
Atlanta, GA<sup>8</sup>*





*We can transform*  
**URBAN  
SPRAWL**

*into*  
**WILD  
CITIES**



*Imagine the outdoors blocked off and out of reach*

*Our long march indoors led us to a life in the city. This move brought about great benefits, but comes at a great cost. Our quality of life, health and wellbeing are paying the price for living further from the outdoors.*

*Between 2010 and 2014, an average of 33,000 people per year left rural areas in the U.S.<sup>2</sup>*

The move to cities is perhaps the greatest migration in human history. In just seven generations, the U.S. reconstructed itself from a rural, agricultural society into an urban, industrialized one.

This move has brought huge benefits: safety, convenience and the ability to create economic value. However, humans are also suffering from how we built our cities: heavy on concrete, light on green space.

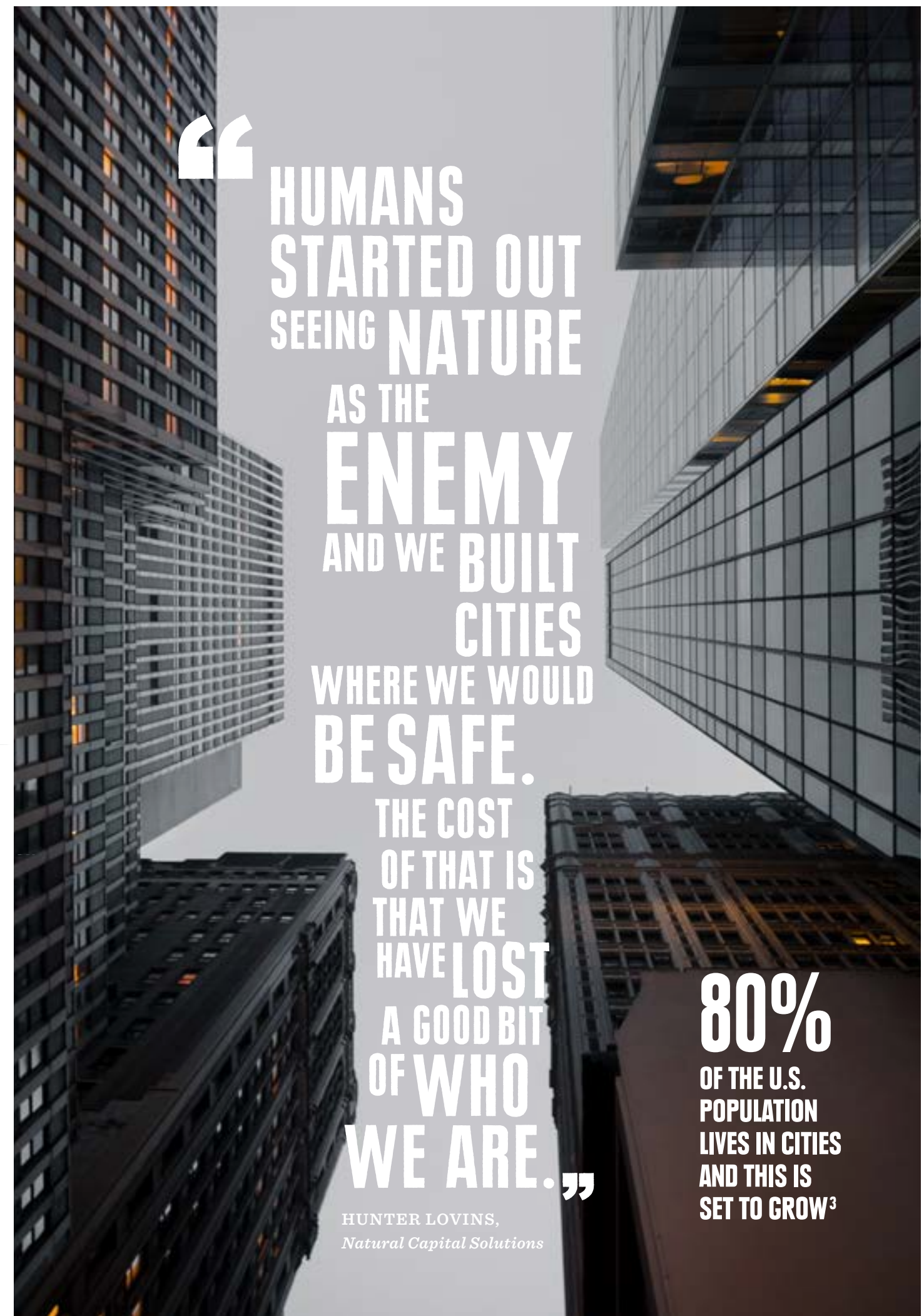
The beauty of our mountains, forests and prairies are central to the identity of America. Yet, many urban Americans don't experience these enriching places on a regular basis. Green space, even in our best-designed cities, is something you have to seek out between buildings and parking lots.

# URBAN SPRAWL

Today, access is one of the primary barriers people cite to getting outdoors.<sup>1</sup> Our transportation systems are geared toward shuttling people within and between cities, plus city dwellers are less likely to own cars.

But the most important casualty of our mass urban migration may be our relationship with the outdoors. No physical relationship means no emotional relationship. If people don't experience the transformational value of the outdoors now, they might not protect it in the future. The repercussions for people *and* planet could be dire.

It's time to rethink our cities to rebuild ourselves.



“

HUMANS  
STARTED OUT  
SEEING NATURE  
AS THE  
ENEMY  
AND WE BUILT  
CITIES  
WHERE WE WOULD  
BE SAFE.

THE COST  
OF THAT IS  
THAT WE  
HAVE LOST  
A GOOD BIT  
OF WHO  
WE ARE.”

HUNTER LOVINS,  
*Natural Capital Solutions*

80%  
OF THE U.S.  
POPULATION  
LIVES IN CITIES  
AND THIS IS  
SET TO GROW<sup>3</sup>





20  
MILLION

visitors to NYC's  
High Line public  
park since it  
opened in 2009<sup>6</sup>

*In Copenhagen, a  
ski slope has been  
built atop an urban  
clean power plant<sup>7</sup>*

“  
There is now  
scientific evidence of  
some really powerful,  
positive things that  
happen to people  
when they experience  
nature in cities.”

KATHLEEN WOLF,  
PhD, University of Washington

*Imagine the outdoors on everyone's doorstep*

*Enjoying the benefits of the outdoors doesn't mean we have to revert to living in the wilderness. Instead, we can redefine "the outdoors" so it starts at our back doors and backyards, not just the backcountry.*

It would be impractical to suggest we reverse the city dwelling megatrend — or that going back to living on the land is the answer for everyone. But we can rethink the way we build our cities to increase people's access to and relationship with the outdoors.

Imagine if we reduced the barriers to getting from city to country and brought more of the outdoors into our cities. Imagine if parking lots were converted to parks, rooftops to gardens and derelict land to open fields. What if there was green, outdoor space 1,000 feet from every American? Urban dwellers could reconnect to nature within walking distance of their apartments and schools.

Several American cities are taking this challenge head-on. City planners and volunteers are greening our urban centers. People are reclaiming space with depaving campaigns, community gardens, greenbelts and expanding park systems. REI is involved in rewilding projects in several cities including Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Chicago and Seattle. They're supporting innovative solutions in places like Washington D.C. to make the city's bike trails a gateway to accessing the outdoors.

The results are starting to show. Eighty-five percent of park directors say the popularity of walking and hiking is increasing in their cities.<sup>4</sup>

*Living in areas with walk-  
able green spaces positively  
influenced longevity of  
urban senior citizens<sup>5</sup>*

Americans are beginning to discover their wilder selves in these wilder cities.

WILD  
CITIES



*Enough  
with*

**ALL  
WORK  
NO PLAY**

*Let's create some*

**HEADSPACE**



# ALL WORK NO PLAY

## *Imagine never unplugging from work*

*Lack of time is the second biggest reason Americans give for not getting outdoors.<sup>1</sup> No wonder: as a nation, we're starved for time. If we continue on this path, there'll be no room for outdoor activities.*

How can we get outdoors if we don't have time? Even planning smaller excursions demands time, something Americans say they don't have enough of.

Seventy-five percent of Americans who get paid time off don't take all of their vacation days, fearing, among other things, losing their job.<sup>3</sup> That means 662 million vacation days a year aren't being taken.<sup>4</sup> And even when people do take vacation, they're not switching off. The blurring of work and personal time means that 61 percent of Americans still work while on vacation.<sup>5</sup>

This symbolizes that our society is regressing; collectively placing less value on leisure time of any sort, including time outdoors. And with no commonly agreed amount of time that we should be spending outdoors, there's no easy way to shape the public policy debate on this issue.

Office workers might be shocked to learn that people who spend four or more hours sitting per day more than double their risk of heart disease and that they face a 50 percent increased risk of death from any cause.<sup>6</sup> And it's not great for business either. Working too many hours is proven to lead to less productivity over time.<sup>7</sup> It's lose-lose.

Unless we start to value time off, we're heading to a life of all work and no play.

*Karoshi:  
Japanese  
word for  
dying of  
overwork*

“The biggest reason that we have found that people are not getting out is time. When you think about busy, working families... it's very difficult.”

RUE MAPP, Founder, Outdoor Afro

**61%**  
of Americans  
still work while  
on vacation<sup>8</sup>

**662  
MILLION**  
unused vacation days  
Americans leave on the  
table every year<sup>9</sup>





**50  
MINUTES**  
spent walking in an  
arboretum improved  
people's memory  
and attention, while  
walking along a city  
street did not<sup>13</sup>

*Planning time off  
is associated with  
increased employee  
happiness about  
their relationships,  
health and wellbeing,  
company and job<sup>14</sup>*

## HEADSPACE

*Imagine a movement for more outdoor days*

*Imagine if we could quantify the economic value of time off and time outdoors then rework our national schedule to include it.*

Institutionalizing regular outdoor breaks from the daily grind could prove to be game-changing for people and the economy. David Strayer, Professor of Psychology at The University of Utah, took 50 people outdoors for three days, no tech allowed. After the short backpacking trip, participants scored 50 percent better on creative problem-solving tasks.<sup>10</sup>

Results like these may encourage businesses to experiment with inventive time-off strategies.<sup>11</sup> REI has made room in employees' schedules to get outside. Employees receive two "yay days" off every year to enjoy the outdoors, in addition to regular vacation.<sup>12</sup> For three consecutive years, REI shut its stores on both Thanksgiving and Black Friday so team members can #OptOutside with another paid day off. This move is creating a new American tradition with millions joining.

It's a simple formula: opting outside leads to happier, healthier employees and that's good news for business and society.

Let's make opting outside a regular part of life.



**I go to nature  
every day for  
inspiration in  
the day's work."**

**FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT,**  
*Architect*



*Instead of being*

**SICK  
AND SAD**



*could we prescribe*

**NATURE  
RX?**



# SICK&SAD

*Imagine closing the door on good health*

*Health in America over the past century is a tale of two halves. While there were huge leaps forward, new issues now undermine our health and happiness.*

Chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and heart disease are now among the leading causes of death in the U.S.,<sup>1</sup> while depression and anxiety are at near-epidemic levels.<sup>2</sup> Today, the U.S. has lower life expectancy than most other developed countries<sup>3</sup> and our kids may be the first generation to live shorter lives than their parents.<sup>4</sup>

What if time outdoors — combined with other approaches — could help?

Today's indoor lifestyle cuts us off from exercise, fresh air and sunlight — as well as the Vitamin D that comes with being outside. And it's not just the physical benefits that we're missing. Studies show that when people are suffering from mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety, interacting with nature can help them control their symptoms or even recover, when time outside is "prescribed" along with conventional medication.<sup>5</sup>

*\$117 billion in healthcare costs are associated with inadequate physical activity in the U.S.<sup>6</sup>*

Our increasing disconnection from the outdoors could well be a key contributor to our declining health. We're homesick for our natural habitat and it's time to change course before we sit ourselves to death.

# 50%

of young people have mental health issues<sup>7</sup>

# 38%

of adults in the U.S. are obese<sup>8</sup>

# "WE ARE SITTING OURSELVES TO DEATH."

DR. JAMES LEVINE,  
*Director of the Mayo Clinic*



A woman with extensive tattoos on her arms and torso is performing a yoga pose (Urdhva Dhanurasana) outdoors on a grassy area. She is wearing a black tank top and leggings. In the background, other people are visible, also engaged in outdoor activities. The image is framed by a green dotted pattern on the right side.

**85%**

of women see the outdoors as key to better physical and mental health and overall wellbeing<sup>15</sup>

**30%**

decrease in PTSD symptoms reported by veterans being treated with nature<sup>16</sup>

**“A drop of nature is like a drop of morphine to the brain.”**

**EVA M. SELHUB MD,**  
*Physician and Co-Author of  
Your Brain on Nature*

## NATURE Rx

*Imagine being prescribed time outdoors to heal*

*If there is one accessible, underutilized and low-cost option to help us, it may be as simple as going outside. Research teams across the country are making the science-based case that time outdoors benefits both mental and physical health.*

Growing bodies of research show that time in nature has preventive and healing effects.<sup>9</sup> “If we could package the outdoors and call it a pharmaceutical, it would be sold widely,” says Tyler Norris, vice president of total health at Kaiser Permanente.<sup>10</sup>

As a society, we should be spending more on access to hiking and biking trails and less on pills and treadmills. Getting outside is good for body and mind. A walk outside lowers stress and reduces inflammation, which is the cause of many diseases.<sup>11</sup> And the feeling of awe we get while experiencing nature is also proven to promote creativity, empathy and generosity toward each other.<sup>12</sup> An investigation by researchers from the University of California indicated that awe diminishes the emphasis on the individual self and, therefore, may encourage people to improve the welfare of others.<sup>13</sup>

Often, the outdoor community is focused on what we need to do to fix the outdoors, but it isn’t the only thing suffering — we are too. The outdoors can be the antidote to so much of what ails us in our 21st century life.

One of our most underused but potentially powerful prescriptions lies just outside our back doors.

*In 2017 the U.S. Surgeon General launched Step It Up!, a call to action to get more Americans walking<sup>14</sup>*



A **VIRTUAL  
WORLD**  
*isn't inevitable*



*Let's build an*  
**AUGMENTED  
OUTDOORS**



# VIRTUAL WORLD

*Imagine only seeing nature on a screen*

*Spending time outside is an essential part of a healthy, well-balanced life. But as we spend more time looking at our screens instead of the sky, how will the relationship between technology and nature unfold?*

We all know the power of a great nature documentary. And we're all inspired by images on our phones that sometimes lead to new adventures. A unique vantage point on the beauty of our shared home can make us feel connected to the outdoors and even inspire a love for places we've never been.

But there's another side to this story. Kids and adults alike are spending more and more time in front of screens.<sup>1</sup> And there's evidence that this may be causing unintended negative consequences.

The effects of screen time on kids range from contributing to obesity and irregular sleep patterns to fueling social and behavioral issues.<sup>2</sup> Time outdoors may be a potential remedy but time outside is declining in our kids' lives at the very moment that screen time is on the rise. It's the same story for adults.

As screens become a ubiquitous fixture of modern life, we should ask the question: are we using screens as a gateway to the outdoors or a substitute for real time spent out there?

Otherwise we may be looking at a world in which the primary way we experience the outdoors is through a screen and that could lead to a complete disconnect from our natural habitat.

**Screen time can have lots of negative effects on kids, ranging from obesity to social and behavioral issues**

## 12 HOURS A DAY

THE AVERAGE AMOUNT KIDS AGED 11-14 SPEND IN FRONT OF A SCREEN<sup>3</sup>

## 71%

OF MILLENIALS WOULD BE UNCOMFORTABLE GOING A WEEK WITHOUT CONNECTIVITY<sup>4</sup>

*The small print: Increased screen time is linked to a rise in nearsightedness in kids<sup>5</sup>*



“

Technology isn't going to solve all the conservation problems of today, but it can be a fantastic tool in the tool box.”

LUCAS JOPPA,  
Technology for Nature

#OPTOUTSIDE  
REACHED TENS  
OF MILLIONS OF  
PEOPLE THROUGH  
THE MEDIA

82 MILLION  
FOLLOWERS  
NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC IS THE  
MOST FOLLOWED  
INSTAGRAM  
ACCOUNT IN THE  
WORLD <sup>6</sup>

6

IF WE OPT OUTSIDE

# AUGMENTED OUTDOORS

*Imagine technology as nature's best friend*

*Reversing technological advancement isn't the answer to getting people outdoors. Instead, we could use technology to help more people fall in love with nature so they go out and experience the real thing.*

Outdoor advocates often position technology as the enemy to a life outdoors. What if we flipped that assumption and built a complementary relationship between technology and nature?

Social media can be a great way to reach a new audience with positive messages about the outdoors and provide people more choices for getting out. Look through the social feeds of our national parks, for example and you see thousands of people celebrating their time in that setting or inviting a friend to go explore it with them. When we see other people enjoying an incredible outdoor experience, it nudges us to get outside as well.

**Imagine if we could  
use technology to  
help more people fall  
in love with nature**

Consider gaming, which traditionally kept people indoors and tethered to couches. That dynamic is changing too. Through augmented reality and geocaching, *Pokémon Go* inspired millions of gamers to head outside and explore their surroundings. There's also an app called

Nature Passport that encourages kids to have fun while exploring their back yards, city parks, beaches and other wild places.

Trends like these show that technology and the outdoors can co-exist. Though it may seem counterintuitive, technology could help many more people get outdoors — if we use it the right way.



*We can  
evolve  
beyond* **NICHE  
NATURE**



*to* **OUTDOORS  
FOR ALL**





# NICHE NATURE

*Today, America's public lands belong to everyone — whatever our religion or race, gender or country of origin. So why are some groups more visible in our shared home?* ***Imagine the outdoors with a closed door***

The outdoors should be our largest level playing field, but in many ways and in many places it is not. The gender, racial and economic inequalities that impact America also affect our relationships with nature. Consider the iconic man on the mountain as the predominant image of outdoor exploration. He doesn't tell the full story. But many times, he is the only story told. There are countless compelling narratives of women and people of color in the outdoors, but they're far less present in media and the marketplace. If we depict the outdoors in a narrow way, we suggest some people aren't welcome in it.

Even iconic outdoor places can be a reminder of our worst collective selves. For instance, racism in America and reminders of its legacy can create painful relationships and highlight cultural tensions.

Economic realities also present real challenges. The shrinking middle class, the working poor and people living below the poverty line don't have easy access to discretionary time or money. So the cost of transportation and limited access to affordable gear could further separate the outdoor "haves" from the "have-nots."

An overly narrow definition of "outdoors" compounds these issues. There's no denying the majesty of our national parks, deserts and mountains. But if we only hold up the faraway places, we may miss the beauty of our nearby rivers, city parks and backyards.

As America continues on its journey to create a more open, inclusive society, the outdoors must lead, not lag behind. Otherwise, participation in and stewardship of the outdoors could be consigned to the few, not the many.

*"When you don't see yourself represented, it's easy to think you're not welcome."*

*Participant at  
2017 LGBTQ Outdoor  
Summit*

**63%**  
*of women said  
they could  
not think of a  
female outdoor  
role model<sup>1</sup>*

**6 in 10**  
*women say that  
men's interests  
in outdoor  
activities are  
taken more  
seriously than  
women's<sup>2</sup>*



*“The outdoors is for all and it is more empowering when we create opportunities and support one another’s voices, welcoming each other into our respective stories.”*

JOSE GONZALEZ  
Founder, Latino Outdoors



# OUTDOORS

*Imagine the outdoors bringing us all together*

*Imagine the outdoors becoming the largest level playing field on earth. We must work together to make the outdoors more equitable, more welcoming and more accessible to all Americans, especially now.*

We are created equal – and we all need the outdoors, whether we know it or not.

REI is working to make the outdoors more open. In 2017, the co-op launched an initiative called Force of Nature, declaring the outdoors the largest level playing field on earth. Years in the making, the goal is to change the narrative, creating a larger sense of community, partly by investing \$1 million in partners dedicated to getting more women and girls outdoors.

*for* A new generation of outdoor leaders also gives us hope for the future. Groups like Unlikely Hikers, Outdoor Afro, Natural Leaders Network, Camber Outdoors, GirlTrek, the YMCA Bold & Gold initiative, Latino Outdoors and OUT There Adventures, all REI partners, are helping change the face of outdoor participation.

# ALL

The signs are promising. In 2016, the first all-African American team climbed Denali, America’s highest peak.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, the first national LGBTQ Outdoor summit was held in Seattle.<sup>4</sup>

The Declaration of Independence cites the unalienable right to pursue happiness and the outdoors brings people joy. So it’s time every American has the opportunity to reap the benefits of a life outdoors and for the outdoors to become a place where everyone feels at home.

*The number of minorities new to camping has doubled since 2014<sup>5</sup>*



*In 2017, REI gave \$1 Million to partners dedicated to getting more women outdoors*





*It's time to end  
the*  
**TURF  
WARS**

*and build a*  
**NATURAL  
ECONOMY**



# Turf WARS

*Imagine the outdoors exploited beyond repair*

*Does nature exist for our use or our abuse? Does it have inherent value? How we choose to answer these questions will have profound implications for the future of life outdoors.*

Nature supplies irreplaceable services. It provides food, water and raw materials that fuel advancements in technology and medicine. It turns carbon dioxide into oxygen and soaks up other greenhouse gases. It gives us places for recreation and renewal and it serves as part of our preventive healthcare system. In 2014, Robert Constanza and a team of researchers put a price tag on these “free” services from nature. The estimated value to the global economy was \$142.7 trillion dollars.<sup>1</sup> That’s quite a debt.

This value is not properly accounted for in our global or national economic system, and because we don’t pay for these gifts, we’re at risk of taking them for granted. That leaves the outdoors vulnerable.

Over the past 12 months, we’ve seen this play out in a series of public debates. The unprecedented, bipartisan outcry surrounding the Department of the Interior’s review of 27 national monuments united more than 350 leaders of outdoor companies around the country. They argued for protecting our federal public lands.

But such land use debates aren’t always easy to resolve. There’s no shortcut to transitioning from an economy that’s relied for centuries on fossil fuels to one that primarily uses renewables. At the same time, human-induced climate change is stressing the planet and generating its own, significant economic hardships. If nature is good for the economy long-term, how do we avoid undermining it?

At home in this big country, Americans have always been free to range, build and sometimes struggle against the land. But we are in danger of missing the trillion dollar point.

It’s time to end the turf wars.

“The economic invisibility of nature is a root cause of the problem of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss.”

PAVAN SUKHDEV,  
Head of UNEP’s Green Economy Initiative

50%  
of the Earth’s land  
has been converted  
for human use<sup>2</sup>

More than  
11  
million  
acres of national  
public land are  
at stake in 2017<sup>3</sup>



## Natural ECONOMY

*Imagine an economy that values nature's value*

*Imagine building an economy that accounts for and protects nature's value, rather than ignoring and eroding it. Imagine an outdoor industry that brings more sustainable jobs and prosperity to communities across America's beautiful spaces.*

Money can't buy the benefits that nature provides us, and we should never seek to reduce the outdoors to just another line on a balance sheet. But in our modern economy, money talks. So if we want to give nature a fighting chance, we should assign it a more definitive value.

Today, breakthrough initiatives seek to do just that. The Natural Capital Protocol is developing a system that allows companies to build nature's value into their accounts. And Kering, the company that owns brands like Gucci and Puma, literally put nature on the balance sheet when it released the first Environmental Profit and Loss Statement in 2015.

Efforts like these contribute to growing evidence that environmental stewardship and economic growth are no longer competing forces. Growth that respects nature is booming. Good-paying jobs in wind and solar are growing at 12 times the rate of the U.S. economy.<sup>4</sup> There are now at least 17 companies globally making \$1 billion or more a year from sustainability-minded products and services. REI is one.<sup>5</sup>

The outdoor industry is also proving that smart development around nature can cultivate local economies and create jobs. In December 2016, the Outdoor Industry marked a major milestone with the passage of the Outdoor Recreation Jobs and Economic Impact Act (REC Act), a law that instructs the U.S. Commerce Department to officially measure the outdoor industry's contribution to the nation's GDP. Early research estimates put the value at \$887 billion a year in consumer spending.<sup>6</sup>

The argument that pits planet against profit is out of date. An investment in our nation's natural capital is an investment in a thriving future.

**\$887  
billion**

a year spent  
by consumers  
on outdoor  
recreation <sup>7</sup>

"The outdoor recreation economy has always been a vital element in the fabric of our country. We're particularly proud to contribute 7.6 million good jobs."

JERRY STRITZKE,  
CEO, REI

**82%**

of Americans  
believe nature  
has inherent  
value <sup>8</sup>



*Let's avoid a*

**POST  
NATURE  
WORLD**

*and seize the*

**OUTSIDE  
CHANCE**



## POST NATURE WORLD

### *Imagine a world without nature*

*If humans were once at the mercy of nature, today we're throwing nature out of balance. We now so dominate our planet that this era is named the Anthropocene<sup>1</sup> — the age of man. We're proving to be the most dangerous species nature has ever encountered.*

In 2017, the U.S. endured some of the most extreme weather events in recorded history. In September, while Houston dug out from Hurricane Harvey — which dumped a year's rainfall in a day<sup>2</sup> — parts of the Caribbean and Puerto Rico were pummeled by two category-four hurricanes.<sup>3</sup> Florida was in and out of the bullseye. Meanwhile, across California and the American West, devastating wildfires raged.

Such events are caused by a range of factors. Scientists point out climate change makes them worse.<sup>4</sup> They take an enormous human and economic toll. The financial burden of Harvey alone is estimated at \$180 billion.<sup>5</sup> Although there are many heroes, homes are lost, people suffer and finances are ravaged.

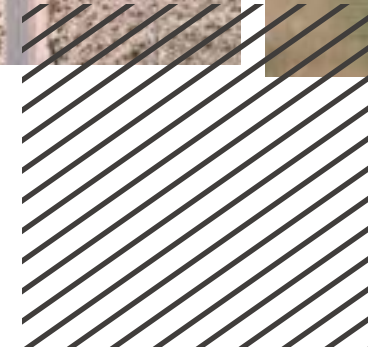
Nature is also paying a steep price. Humans are changing the climate faster than nature can adapt, with devastating results. Expanding human habitats, deforestation and pollution of ecosystems, are additional ways our actions undermine nature.

Aside from the greater planetary threat, left unchecked, these impacts will change the American outdoors. Imagine Glacier National Park with no glaciers or Joshua Tree National Park with no Joshua Trees.

This is the path we are on. But it's not too late to change course.

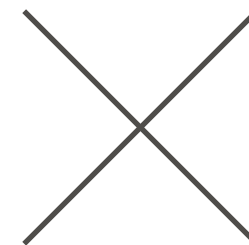
We can address climate change and manage our economy in ways that bring us into balance with the world around us.<sup>6</sup> There's not a moment to waste.

**4x** increase in  
natural disasters  
per year between  
1970 and 2017<sup>7</sup>



**“Climate change has happened because of human behavior, therefore it's only natural it should be us, human beings, to address this issue.”**

BAN KI MOON,  
*Former Secretary General,  
the United Nations*

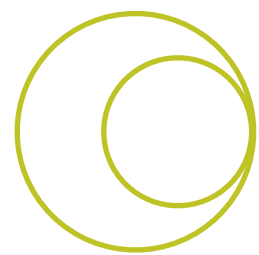


**30,000**  
species per year  
(or three per hour)  
are being driven to  
extinction<sup>8</sup>



1/3

of climate emissions could be offset by stopping deforestation and restoring forest land<sup>14</sup>



Nature is **37%** of the solution to stabilizing our climate<sup>15</sup>

*A shoe made out of thin air:  
In 2016, NRG made a shoe  
from CO<sub>2</sub> recycled from the air*



“I call myself a stubborn climate optimist. And I invite you all to be stubborn climate optimists.”

CHRISTIANA FIGUERES,  
Former Executive Director,  
UNFCCC

9

IF WE OPT OUTSIDE

## THE OUTSIDE CHANCE

### *Imagine nature fighting climate change*

*The dominant climate narrative may be negative, but there are compelling reasons to believe that we can and will succeed in tackling climate change. Nature has a key role in making it happen and we have the opportunity to become a restorative force — for nature and for ourselves.*

The news reports might be filled with doom and gloom, but there’s a growing consensus that we can tackle climate change. Two thirds of the planet are climate optimists: individuals who believe a better future is possible.<sup>9</sup> That’s good news, because solving climate change starts with the belief that we can.

Experts also agree. Ninety-five percent of climate experts believe we can take back our climate,<sup>10</sup> and they’re working hard to make it happen.

Many governments are playing their part. The Paris Agreement put over 190 countries on a path to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius by 2050. In the business community, more than 300 global companies are committed to science-based climate targets.<sup>11</sup> Others are inventing brilliant low-carbon products.

We the people are learning that living sustainably often means living better. Solar power is better for the pocketbook than fossil fuels;<sup>12</sup> biking, walking and running are better for the heart than driving; and lower impact consumption, like renting or buying pre-owned products, is better for the bank account.

Crucially, nature won’t just be a beneficiary; it will be a key part of how we succeed.<sup>13</sup> Trees, grasslands and soils can become carbon sinks, sucking greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere and storing them in the ground. It’s a beautiful possibility — that the outdoors becomes not the victim of, but part of the solution to, the biggest problem facing mankind today.

We need to go out and make more outdoors. Our future depends on it.



A person wearing a bright yellow jacket, a red beanie, and dark pants is walking away from the viewer across a narrow, rustic suspension bridge. The bridge has a wooden plank deck and wire mesh railings. It stretches straight into a dense, dark green forest of tall evergreen trees. The lighting is soft and slightly hazy, creating a serene and adventurous atmosphere.

# TIME TO CHOOSE

The path we take today will shape  
the future of life outdoors.  
We hope you choose the one that  
leads to the peace of a still river,  
the adventure of a mountain range  
or the awe of a starry night sky.



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