

Accounts of women going into the mountain



Summer on the high plateau can be as delectable as honey; it can also be a roaring scourge. To those who love the place, both are good, since both are part of its essential nature. And it is to know its essential nature that I am seeking here.

Nan Shepherd

This research project is to celebrate and explore specifically women's experiences in the region of the Cairngorms Massif described in Nan Shepherd's book, *The Living Mountain*.

Simone Kenyon who is leading the project is an artist and dance maker whose work explores our relationships to place through our physical and emotional Landscapes. She is researching the ways in which women encounter the Cairngorms environment as an attempt to collect and connect women's stories, from the bold ascents to the delicate details and sensing of going into the mountains and natural environments in general. She hopes this research will highlight the often-overlooked stories and voices of women's relationships and understandings of the outdoors as well as offering inspiration for the future development of a performance/dance work.

Whether your interests is for work or leisure and involves walking, mountaineering, climbing, skiing, mountain biking or a bit of everything, Simone would like to hear in your own words, your experiences of being in the unique Cairngorms landscapes. Simone is looking to speak with as many women of all ages and experiences who have spent time in the Cairngorms National Park.

Women In the Cairngorms: Personal Recollections

Thanks you for taking the time to participate in recounting and documenting your experiences in the Cairngorms.

This survey could take around 20 minutes depending on how much information you would like to give. I invite you to take some time to think about your experiences and interests of being in the Cairngorms. You can write as much as you like for each question.

Information Confidentiality: The information you send will be only read by myself at this stage. I invite you to write openly about your experiences, memories, personal, physical and emotional relationships with the Cairngorms environment and to nature in general.

If you are happy to share your information publicly on the project blog site in the future you can always edit and omit certain elements of your response at a later date, or you don't need to share it publicly at all. I hope this written interview/questionnaire allows you an opportunity to reflect and enjoy thinking about your relationship to the environment. Don't let the idea that this could be a public document edit your response.

Once completed please return your documents to the project email address:
gointothemountain@gmail.com



View on the Cairngorms in Scotland, with the river Dee in the valley below.

You and the Cairngorms

1. Do you live in the Cairngorm region or come as a visitor?
2. What times of year do you like to go into these mountains?
3. Do you have any family history linked to the area?
4. How do you like to explore the area? (i.e. walking, climbing cycling, canoeing, gliding, skiing) and what times of the year do you explore the area?
5. Do you have any specific work or hobby interests that connect you to the Cairngorms area? If so what are these?
6. Can you remember and describe the first time you went into the Cairngorms?
7. If you were to recommend a favourite place or route to experience in the area where would it be?
8. Could you describe what it is about that place or routes/pathways that resonates with you?
9. Do you have any specific memories that come to mind about your experiences? Please share as many memories as you like!
10. Do you know any stories about the mountains that relate to how women relate to the area?
11. Who do you usually come to the Cairngorms with, or do you come on your own?

12. If you are a mother has this changed how you interact with the environment? E.g. Your relation to time, risk-taking, practicalities, emotional or physical changes and new perspectives. Please feel free explain in your own words:

Sensing the Mountains: knowledge underfoot, through the fingers and the whole body.



As part of the creative aspects to this project I am interested in learning how we find ways to communicate or articulate the stories and knowledge our bodies hold and grow through experience. The questions below are to explore further the physical learning we gain from being outdoors:

1. Could you describe moments or situations when you feel your senses have been heightened when outdoors ?

2. What senses feel the most prominent to you when you exploring the area? What comes to your attention for example?

3. Has being in natural environment given you more skills or improved certain aspects of the way you move or interact with the landscape both mentally and physically?

4. How important are the senses to you when you are exploring the outdoors?

5. Do you have any memories that relate specifically to your body in relation to being out in the Cairngorms?

6. In her book, Nan Shepherd writes about her playful nature of seeing the world in different ways- seeing the world upside down, laying and looking down over the edges of the mountains, snoozing on the tops through the day and camping out at night, walking slowly, feeling textures and watching animals.
Do you have any particular ways that you like to experience environments like the Cairngorms?

7. How much do you interact with the area with skill and practical knowledge and how much is intuitive and felt through your physical awareness?

8. Have you ever slept or walked at night on the mountains? If so could you describe your experience/s?

9. How does the weather or time of year affect your body and the experience of your senses?

Final Thoughts

1. What do you feel you learn or gain personally from exploring natural environments physically?

2. Are there any questions you feel I haven't asked or thoughts that come to mind that you would like to share?

3. Are there any references / books / websites created by women that explore our relationship to natural environments you could recommend?

“Here then may be lived a life of the senses so pure, so untouched by any apprehension but their own, that the body may be said to think. Each sense heightened to its most exquisite awareness is in itself total awareness.”
The Living Mountain

Personal Details and sharing your information publicly

Name:

Age: (optional)

Email:

Telephone:

Personal websites or blogs addresses:

Sharing your Photographs/Images

If you would like to include any favourite photographs or images that help illustrate your experiences please compress and attach as jpegs.

If they are large images you can also send them via we transfer: <https://www.wetransfer.com/>

Sharing your information publicly

I will create a blog site that can house the collection of people’s accounts as a means to begin creating an online community for you to be connected to.

1. Are you happy to share your information on a public blog site? **Yes/ No** (delete as appropriate)

Note: If there are elements of your writing you do not wish to share publicly please highlight these in this document or we can discuss further over email.

2. Would you like your name/surname to be included in your information if shared on the blog? Delete as appropriate how you would like to be credited:

First name only

Full name

Anonymous

3. **If you are including photographs/images** Are you happy for your photographs to be shared on the public blog site? **Yes/No** (delete as appropriate)

Many thanks for your time and I look forward to staying in touch about the project as it progresses. If there are other women you know who would enjoy sharing their experiences and contributing to the project, please do send them this survey.

Warmest Wishes

Simone Kenyon

I have walked out of the body and into the Mountain