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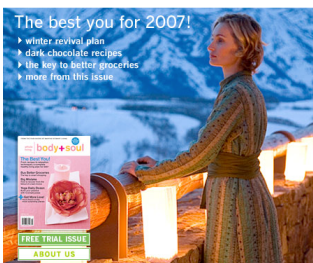
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EXPERIENCE THE OUTDOORS

"If you have to endure such a long, dark winter as we do in Scandinavia, you become more aware of the contrasts of life," says renowned Arctic explorer Mikael Strandberg, "especially when it comes to being outside." Strandberg and Lindahl both subscribe to the concept of *friluftsliv* (Swedish for "free-time outdoor life"), an essential component of the Scandinavian understanding of well-being. According to Lindahl, it translates as a deep love and appreciation of the outdoors, one that runs through all sectors of Scandinavian society. (Even the queen of Norway, an avid outdoorswoman, donated her hiking boots to a museum.) For anyone trying to see winter in a new light, adopting *friluftsliv* is a crucial first step. "Well-being is not only about burning calories or eating right but about spending more time surrounded by nature," Lindahl says. "If you give it a chance, you may find that you're able to achieve more joy during the winter than in any other season." Here's how.



Find good company. It's easier and more fun to commit to spending time outdoors if you do it with a partner. In Scandinavia, many try to get out during the weekend. Follow their lead and make dates with old friends for cross-country skiing treks or snowshoeing adventures. Or make new friends by joining regular group outings led by local chapters of the Sierra Club. Hanging out with children also makes for a guaranteed workout. "When Claes and I bring our kids sledding," says Lindahl, "we end up running up and down hills for hours. It's so much fun, and we hardly notice all the exercise we're getting." And kids or no kids, there's always that old childhood standby—the snowball fight.

Go for a walk. "The clarity of mind you get from being out in the winter can't be beaten," says Lindahl, who walks her children to school every morning across a lake that's frozen from January through April. If you really want to amp up your heart rate, take things a step further with Nordic walking, a sport that has become a Scandinavian national pastime since its inception in Finland in the early 1930s. Originally conceived of as an off-season training method for competitive cross-country skiers, it combines the concepts behind this sport with vigorous walking. Enthusiasts use special Nordic-walking poles (modified ski poles) and a safety shoe attachment for icy surfaces, pushing down on the ground with every stride. **The result: a full-body workout that benefits core muscles like the back, chest, shoulders, and abs. "Nordic walking burns at least 20 percent more calories than regular walking," says Malin Svensson, president of Nordic Walking USA. "And the active resistance against the poles connects the whole body, creating a very calming, meditative rhythm."**

Bring the dogs. Norwegian for "ski driving," ski-joring is a traditional Scandinavian activity in which one or two dogs (think: huskies—not Yorkies) draw a skier over the snow. All you need are a pair of skis and a cushioned belt for you, a rope that attaches to a comfortable harness for your best friend, and the willingness to try something new. It's beginning to pick up speed in the northern parts of the United States, with trails and clubs specifically designated for teaching and advancing the sport. Don't ski? No problem—just being outside with a pup does wonders for your mind and body. "There's such a difference when I spend time outdoors with my dog," says Strandberg. "He's not just a partner. He can understand and see so many things that I, as a human, can't."