

Creating the perfect outdoor workplace

By David Ferry, Outside

The latest trend in office design is to get as far away from the cubical as possible. Human beings, after all, labored for tens of thousands of years outdoors until relatively recently, so cultivating a natural work environment makes sense. Right?

That's the concept guiding cutting-edge companies like Google, which has recently embraced "biophilic design"—that is, creating indoor spaces that feel like the great outdoors. Living trees and natural light are just the tip of the iceberg. Amazon's new downtown Seattle headquarters, for example, will include an enormous rainforest inside a geodome. Employees can host meetings there or take impromptu walks during the workday.

But why pretend to work outside when the real outdoors beckons right through the windows? Spending time in nature, according to Harvard physician Eva Selhub's book "Your Brain on Nature", is associated with positive emotions and increased mental and physical energy. Whether you spend time backpacking through Yellowstone or jogging in Central Park, the aim is the same: to improve yourself.

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