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Where do longest living people live?

If you are trying to keep your health journey with confidence, live longer, this is the path to follow.

What are blue zones?

Discovering where people live longest by Dan Buettner, Blue Zones founder, is a National geographical Fellow and multiple New York Times bestselling author found five places in the world-dubbed blue zones-where people live the longest, and are healthiest: Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece, and Loma Linda, California.

“I’ve travelled the world for National Geographic to identify the diet, eating patterns, and lifestyles of the world’s longest-lived people. The Blue Zones Meal Planner makes it easy for everyone to eat in a way that gives them the best chance to live to 100.”

Dan Buettner, Founder of BlueZones®

The concept of the blue zone, that is marking a blue circle for countries where people live longest, was created by Gianni Pes and Michel Poulain, and they outline in the Journal of Experimental Gerontology. Blue zone reflects the lifestyle and the environment of the world’s longest-lived people.

Life expectancy of an American born today averages 78.2 years and this year over 70,000 Americans have reached their 100th birthday. What is there secret that the other Americans did not know.

The Danish Twin Study established that only about 20% of the lifestyles of the average man is determined by their genes.

Blue zone countries are:

- Barbagia region of Sardinia – Mountainous highlands of inner Sardinia with the world’s highest concentration of male centenarians.

- Ikaria, Greece – Aegean Island with one of the world’s lowest rates of middle age mortality and the lowest rates of dementia. They ate a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil, red wine, and homegrown vegetables.
- Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica – World’s lowest rates of middle age mortality, second highest concentration of male centenarians, and one of the largest populations of centenarians on the planet
- Seventh Day Adventists – highest concentration is around Loma Linda, California. They live 10 years longer than their North American counterparts.
- Okinawa, Japan – Females over 70 are the longest-lived population in the world.

According to these researchers, they found that all blue zones areas shared nine specific lifestyle habits and they call them the Power 9 -lifestyle habits of the World’s Healthiest, Longest-lived people.

1. They move naturally.

They do not take iron pills, run marathons, or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it. They grow gardens and do not have mechanical conveniences for house and yard work.

2. Purpose-driven -inspired by a greater good (Day 1 to 30 Days of Health.

The Okinawans call it “Ikigai” and the Nicoyans call it “plan de vida;” for both it translates to “why I wake up in the morning.” Knowing your sense of purpose or knowing you reason for being, is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy. ‘Iki’ means life.

3. Down Shift

Even people in the Blue Zones experience stress. Stress leads to chronic inflammation, associated with every major age-related disease. What the world’s longest-lived people have that we do not are routines to shed that stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors, Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap and Sardinians do happy hour.

4. 80% Rule

“Hara hachi bu” – the Okinawan, 2500-year-old Confucian mantra said before meals reminds them to stop eating when their stomachs are 80 percent full. The 20% gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight or gaining it. People in the blue zones eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and then they do not eat any more the rest of the day.

5. Plant Slant

Beans, including fava, black, soy and lentils, are the cornerstone of most centenarian diets. Meat—mostly pork—is eaten on average only five times per month. Serving sizes are 3-4 oz., about the size of a deck of cards.

6. Wine @ 5

People in all blue zones (except Adventists) drink alcohol moderately and regularly. Moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers. The trick is to drink 1-2 glasses per day (preferably Sardinian Cannonau wine), with friends and/or with food. And no, you cannot save up all week and have 14 drinks on Saturday.

7. Belong

All but five of the 263 centenarians we interviewed belonged to some faith-based community. Denomination does not seem to matter. Research shows that attending faith-based services four times per month will add 4-14 years of life expectancy.

8. Loved Ones First

Successful centenarians in the blue zones put their families first. This means keeping aging parents and grandparents nearby or in the home (It lowers disease and mortality rates of children in the home too.). They commit to a life partner (which can add up to 3 years of life expectancy) and invest in their children with time and love (They will be more likely to care for you when the time comes).

9. Right Tribe

The world's longest-lived people chose—or were born into—social circles that supported healthy behaviors, Okinawans created "moais"—groups of five friends that committed to each other for life. Research from the Framingham Studies shows that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness is contagious. So, the social networks of long-lived people have favorably shaped their health behaviors.

Let us talk more on Ikarians in the Greek island, The Ikarians in Ikaria Greek Island are happier and healthier. They have mysterious powers that enables them to live far longer than the average person in other parts of the world. They, have lower rates of cancer and heart disease and hardly any dementia. They have lived in a rocky mountainous island for at least 9000 years. People in Ikaria, Sardinia, Okinawa are untouched by the Western civilization, or American food culture. They do not reach for comfort, that will be not the best for longevity, but a little bit of hardship seems to help them to live longer. They meet once a week and socialize, dance and drink 2-3 glasses of local brewed wine and this would be their key to longevity.

Okinawa, Japan, is one of the 5 blue zones where people live a healthy life and is the home to the world's longest-lived women.

Not only do the older inhabitants enjoy the longest life expectancy of anyone on Earth, but the vast majority of those years are lived in remarkably good health too. For every 100,000 inhabitants, Okinawa has 68 centenarians – more than three times the numbers found in US populations of the same size. Even by the standards of Japan, Okinawans are remarkable, with a 40% greater chance of living to 100 than other Japanese people.

In their daily food, they eat a high ratio of carbs to protein, with a particular abundance of sweet potatoes as the source of most of their calories. The ratio of carbs to protein is 10:1.

It is just the opposite of current popular diets that advocate a high protein, low carb diets.

Despite the popularity of the Atkins and Paleo diets, however, there is minimal evidence that high-protein diets really do bring about long-term benefits.

High Carb and low protein diet seem to protect these people from age related illnesses- including cancer, cardiovascular disease, and Alzheimer's disease.

In Okinawa, people traditionally sit on the floor to read, eat, talk, and relax instead of sitting in chairs, though this practice is dying out among younger generations in Asia. Okinawan elders sit and get up from the floor without support, dozens, or hundreds of times per day. Sitting on the floor also improves posture and increases overall strength, flexibility, and mobility.

Studies correlate that the ability to sit and rise from the floor without support leads to longer life expectancy.

Sitting on the floor develops Musculo-skeletal fitness.

Elderly Okinawans are highly respected and are treated with respect.

Okinawans are led by the concepts of Moai and Ikigai in their everyday life, giving them a sense of purpose and drive.

Hope you enjoyed this enlightening video talk on longevity and was useful.
Stay safe and goodbye for now.