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# The secrets of a long life

In three areas of the world a very high number of people live to be 100. Scientists want to know why. What do the three places have in common?

## Ecuador

**Vilcabamba, a small village in the Andes, is often called ‘the Valley of Long Life’.** What’s its secret? **Firstly**, Vilcabamba is not very hot or very cold – the temperature is usually between 18 and 27 degrees, and the air is very clean. **Secondly**, people work hard in the fields, and do a lot of exercise. **Thirdly**, their diet is very healthy – they eat a lot of fruit and vegetables, and they hardly ever eat meat or fish. The water they drink, from the river in Vilcabamba, is very rich in minerals. They also have a good social life. In Vilcabamba people say, ‘The left leg and the right leg help you to be healthy, because they take you to your friends’ homes.’



## Italy

**In Ogliastra, a mountain region of Sardinia, one out of every 200 people lives to be 100**, and they are normally very healthy, too. Most of the people in the villages work outside in their fields and with their animals. They have a healthy diet, with a lot of vegetables and not much meat or fish. They hardly ever take any medicine, but they usually drink a little *grappa* before they go to bed. ‘Life is hard,’ says Fortunato, who is a shepherd, ‘but I am never stressed. I never read the newspaper – because I can’t read very well.’



## Japan

**People in Okinawa in Japan do not have big meals.** They usually just have vegetables and fish, and often eat soya. Okinawans are very active, and they often work until they are 80 or more. But they also relax every day – they see friends and they meditate. Ushi, from Okinawa, is 107. In the evening she often dances with her daughter and has a glass of *sake*. ‘I want to have a boyfriend,’ she says. When journalists ask people from Okinawa ‘What is your secret?’ they answer, ‘We are happy, we are always positive, and we are never in a hurry.’



**grappa** – an Italian alcoholic drink  
**sake** – a Japanese alcoholic drink  
**soya** – a kind of bean typical in Asia