



JASON HOFFMAN/THRILLIST

TRAVEL

## I SPENT A WEEK AT A SWINGERS RESORT AND LEARNED WAY TOO MUCH ABOUT 'THE LIFESTYLE'

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Some things, you just can't unsee.

And as I watched a grown man get penetrated by a pretty young blonde wearing a terrifying strapon, I knew the image would be burned into my mind forever. His screams reminded me of the knee

injuries I'd seen playing high-school football. They were interrupted by his wife's insistence that he take another shot of tequila to kill the pain. The blonde pushed on.

The man's wife fed her husband a shot, reclined onto my lap, and asked me, as she settled into watch the show: "Is this turning you on?"

I stammered. "Um... I'm just gonna..." I stood up, made the universal sign for nap time, and pointed out the door. The rest of the group looked confused. But after a week of sexual saturation I'd reach sensory overload. All I really wanted was a shower.

This was how I ended Young Swingers Week, a thrice-annual gathering at Jamaica's Hedonism II, where young couples converge to meet other couples for a week of barely clothed sexual exploration. It's like going to any other all-inclusive couples resort, except instead of inviting those nice people from Sioux Falls to doubles tennis lessons, you meet them naked in a hot tub and invite them to get whipped with riding crops. It's a skewed reality, tucked at the end of Seven Mile Beach in Negril -- safely away from the sunburned families and spring breakers. The people who frequent (and I do mean frequent) these events are into a lifestyle most of us would consider an outer-edge taboo. Even after a full week of watching them really be themselves, I was left wondering: Just who are these people, and why do they come here?

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## Swingers come here for the anonymity

The word "swinger" carries a smarmy connotation, unfairly. It conjures images of men with thinning, greasy hair, their silicon-stuffed wives, and everyone in Florida. And because a great many swingers don't live in Florida, and are actually young, attractive, non-smarmy people, many take their limited vacation and spend it at Young Swingers Week. Where only couples under 45 are allowed, and the judgment of the outside world can't come either.

"Hell no, I can't do this back home," scoffed Mark, an attractive 40-something agriculturalist from one of the world's biggest wine regions. When we talked at dinner, he was dressed in a leather vest and had a leash attached to his neck, which his wife held while she chatted with a couple next to her. "My town has 9,000 people, and everyone knows me. Even in (the big city), I'm too well-known from doing business. We come here, we're completely anonymous. We can do whatever we want."

As I chatted up swingers, this theme of escaping hometown gossip kept emerging. Roger, a 40-year-old dentist from Appalachia, told me the struggles he and his wife -- who is 21 -- had finding outlets

for her youthful sexual energy.

## **"THIS MAKES SPRING BREAK LOOK LIKE A MORMON SUMMER CAMP," I TOLD MY DATE.**

"We had our problems at the start, when we met," he said. (This was as they sat naked in the hot tub her on his lap, steam rising in front of his face.) "We started dating when she was 18. And she wanted to do all kinds of things. But no WAY we can do that stuff back home. And some of the other resorts were all 21-plus, so we came here."

His wife could have been an SEC cheerleader in another life. Petite and blonde, with a cute Southern demeanor and a charming drawl, she was the antithesis of what people picture when they hear the word "swinger."

"We don't hook up with a lot of people," she said, eyeing me and my date intensely. "We just like to come and make friends, and then maybe we all take a trip to one of these resorts and all play with each other, right? Y'all should come with us sometime." As casually as suggesting we drop by their summer home on the Outer Banks.

### **They go to extremes to disguise their vacation from folks back home**

How deep is the taboo of being a swinger? Nearly all of the couples I met tell friends and family they're going to Sandals, the family-friendly all-inclusive resort next door. Some even go so far as to buy Sandals day passes just so they can take pictures to post on social media. And that's just the beginning of the ruse.

"People will go over there (to Sandals) the first day with, like, four changes of clothes," said Leslie, one of the co-founders of Young Swingers Week with her husband, Brett. "They'll take pictures doing different stuff in different outfits like they're different days. Then post each day like they're actually there. Some people even go sit at a table after people are done eating looking like they just had dinner at the restaurant."

For some couples, swinging is all they do for vacation. On the bus from the Montego Bay airport, I tried to strike up a conversation with a bald man whose bearing screamed law enforcement.

"You been to Dominica?" I asked "It's beautiful. Like tropical waterfalls and rocky beaches and..."

"They got a swingers resort there?" he interrupted.

"No, but..."

"Yeah, then we probably won't ever go," he said.

## **OFTEN THEY COME TO ESCAPE GOSSIP. ONE DENTIST TOLD ME: "NO WAY WE CAN DO THAT STUFF BACK HOME."**

A few seats over, a 30-something brunette piped up: "We don't even talk about where to go on vacation now." This was Katie, who was sporting NBA lottery pick-level jewelry. "We can't go anywhere else. We love it here, we love the people. It's just home for us now."

Thus, I learned, is the subculture of the swingers lifestyle, where couples meet at resorts and plan other trips together. These sexcations monopolize their travel, mostly to well-known clothing-optional resorts, but also on swingers cruises. At Hedonism, swingers also mentioned Desire in Riviera Maya and Tampa's Caliente, home of the Naked 5K. The Groove Cruise is also known as a pretty big swingers event, and Nathan Bliss, who runs Miami's notorious BLISS parties for couples and bi-curious women, has his own cruise, too.

The difference at Young Swingers Week isn't just that people are youngish, though that helps. As Brett, the co-founder of Young Swingers Week, explained, it's that people of similar ages can also have -- wait, not orgies. I'm trying to think of the other word. Oh, right! *Conversations*. They did things like graduating college, starting work, and getting married at around the same time. They can bond over stories of watching scrambled Playboy TV or losing their virginity to Sade's *Love Deluxe* or flirting on Myspace.

Then, presumably, they move on to other things.



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## Married people are less boring than they appear

My first afternoon at Young Swingers Week, I looked out upon a naked pool that would've melted the brain of teenaged me. "This makes spring break look like a Mormon summer camp," I told my date.

Naked, tanned people crowded against one another in waist-deep water. Women made out with each other while their male partners danced on them from behind. It was hard to tell who was having sex and who wasn't, but the hue of the turquoise water visible amid the sea of breasts and biceps indicated *somebody* was. At least the sinus-piercing odor of chlorine assured me it was relatively sanitary.

Within an hour, the onslaught of nipples and penises and vaginas and piercings blended into a giant wall of sex. Seeing somebody clothed started to feel like a novelty. My thoughts turned inward as my brain settled into a defensive posture.

As a single guy, I realized I still don't appreciate the pent-up sexual energy a married couple might have when presented with the prospect of sex with new people, with the blessing of a spouse or partner. Ostensibly, single people are free to have whatever new sexual experiences they can negotiate with the world. But for married folks -- especially the couples from non-Florida areas where swinging is frowned upon -- they have only one week away from reality to acknowledge that they, too, ain't nothing but mammals.

## **AFTER A WEEK OF SEXUAL SATURATION ALL I REALLY WANTED WAS A SHOWER.**

This is why, if you're at a resort of this sort, you head to breakfast and find yourself walking past a couple boinking on one of the daybeds that lines the pool. Midmorning you stumble into a fake orgasm contest. An afternoon trip to the naked pool has you discussing the finer points of post-Napoleonic European nation-building with a half-buzzed college professor while, nearby, four women go down on one another in a daisy chain.

You will not believe me when I say this, because you, too, were once a teenager. But by the second day, none of this seemed even the least bit unusual.

"It's like six months of swinging packed into every day," said DJ, a Bostonian academic and one of the few people there willing to give his real name. He and his wife are active swingers back home, and often meet people at the resort who they later meet up with in Boston. "It's so compressed. By the end of our first week here, my wife and I got on the plane and looked at each other like, *What just happened?*"



HEDONISM

## **You can overdose on anything, even sex**

Reader, I tell you this: Orgies are like cheesecake or whiskey shots or repeat roller coaster rides. A little bit goes further than you think, and any more can go too far real quick.

The idea of a week where you could potentially have sex with multiple new people every day may seem like a lifetime apex. Even that rush wears off in a hurry. When breasts and butts and perfectly groomed groins are all you see when you close your eyes, and nights are spent in a "playroom" where couples openly have sex for everyone to watch, nothing is arousing anymore. Like junior-soccer participation trophies, when everything is special then nothing is special. By the fifth day, I'd OD'ed. Some janky food I'd gotten from a street cart on my lone trip off-property wasn't helping matters either.

My date, however, was nowhere near done. Unbeknownst to me, she had a proclivity for "pegging," wherein a woman straps on a dildo and, shall we say, reverses roles with her man.



# MARRIED FOLKS COME TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY, TOO, AIN'T NOTHING BUT MAMMALS.

This was not something I felt needed to be on my list of life experiences. Especially after my unfortunate run-in with Jamaican street food.

However, my date was intent on finding a guy to peg, and despite my depleted state I followed her on her quest. It ended around 1am in a room not far from ours. Like a resigned zombie I sat on a couch with the man's wife and watched my date strap on a phallus, lube up the man's backside, and slide it in over his screams of pain. The wife tried to play with me; my body would not respond. And after a week of seeing things I never thought I would, I was done. It would be another two weeks before I had even a passing interest in sex.

As I waited in my room for my date to finish up with the couple, I took the longest, deepest shower I could remember. I realized swingers are a special breed, and for a committed couple curious about exploring new things, Young Swingers Week makes for a perfect vacation. But for a single guy peering into this curious world they call "the lifestyle," it might be a bit much to handle. Because when flesh is that ubiquitous, it can fry you. And for the sake of your sex life, some fantasies might be better left imagined.

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[Matt Meltzer](#) is a contributing writer to Thrillist who suffered no lingering effects from reporting this story. Follow him on Instagram [@meltrez1](#).

