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Images

— There's an emotional nakedness that comes with physically stripping away clothes, experts say.

Last night was crazy. Not in the Las Vegas sense of [over-imbibing](#) and forgetting where your hotel room is kind of crazy, but the kind where you go to a toga foam party and everyone ends up naked in a sea of glorious, sudsy, wild debauchery. And that was only the first night I spent at Jamaica's [Hedonism II](#), a clothing-optional resort situated against the sparkling blue Caribbean Sea.

MY EXPERIENCE AT A NUDIST RESORT

In the months and weeks leading up to the trip, I'd be lying if I didn't tell you I was [terrified of stripping down in front of strangers whose minds I couldn't stop from judgement](#). And yet, despite my fears, my conservative Mennonite upbringing, and my tendency to lean prude, it was a keen desire for exploring the unknown that fueled me both early on and throughout a wild five days.

It fueled me during check in, when everyone eyed me with a knowing smile, saying, "You're a virgin to the resort, aren't you?", and it kept me going upon that first, wide-eyed walk across campus to my room where, in modest street clothes, it finally hit me that I was fully immersed in a nudist community.

Perhaps the most surprising part of taking a “nacation” – a nude vacation – was just how quickly my inhibitions, insecurities and shock melted away. Within three hours of arrival, I tepidly disrobed to [experience the ocean](#) like I never had before: completely naked. By day three, I was walking across campus sans-clothing, somehow liberated from a long list of self-perceived body flaws I’ve written about myself over the years.

I learned that time spent in the pool is much better without being confined in an uncomfortable bathing suit you’re constantly adjusting, that for the most part humans see the beauty in others and the “flaws” don’t actually matter, and that [freeing yourself from a prison of anxiety-driven inhibitions](#) can lift a weight you didn’t even realize you were holding.



THE NACATION TREND

The “nudist” crowd, in my personal experience, is exceptionally diverse. Not just in ethnicity, but in age, in profession, in religion, and in background. While sipping Red Stripe in the nude pool, I chatted with a well-known rabbi’s daughter – a 50-something white woman from New York who’d been to the resort 17 times. I spoke to a timid black couple there for the first time celebrating their anniversary and, conversely, to a long-time married couple who’d been over 30 times and clearly [knew how to keep the spark alive](#).

It turns out, the “nacation” industry is pretty substantial. For example, [a Florida-focused economic study](#) conducted in 2017 by the American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR) and American Association for Nude Travel Florida Region learned that 4.3 billion was directly spent on nude travel in the state (which has over 30 nudist resorts) in 2016. Florida obviously isn’t alone. Even traditional companies, [such as Carnival](#), are now catering to the nacation trend.

Clearly, more people are taking these sorts of trips than what you’d assume. The question is why? And why are so many of them

repeat attenders? Though it's impossible to provide a blanket answer, we can at least offer psychologist-backed speculation.

“There are several reasons why some people are drawn to a nude vacation,” says [Dr. Sanam Hafeez](#), a neuropsychologist based in New York City. “Some people have routine lives. They wake up, go to work, work, return home, and have this secure outward persona. They also have another side to themselves that wants to be self-expressed and free. A nude vacation experience for some satisfies that.”

She likens this kind of vacation to the thrill some people feel when camping, scaling a mountain or finishing a marathon.

Dr. Gail Saltz, associate professor of psychiatry at the New York Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine, agrees, speaking more to the “sexualized” energy of a resort like Hedonism or Florida’s [Cypress Cove Nudist Resort](#).

“Many, many people have at least unconsciously some sexual inhibitions, and they may long to feel less conflicted and more uninhibited,” she says. “Having an entity – like a resort – that other people endorse and subscribe to and gives permission to be extremely uninhibited (and in fact, for our society, unusually permissive), helps these people to feel excited and free in a way they normally cannot.”

In these environments, permission is being given to view other bodies and to exhibit your own body, both of which can be arousing, sexually exciting, and confidence-building, as it satisfies normal human voyeuristic and exhibitionistic desires, she explains. There's also an emotional nakedness that comes with actually stripping away clothes.

“Our clothing tells people who we are. They can make assumptions about what we do for a living, where we may live, just by observing what we are wearing,” says Dr. Hafeez. “If a man is in a suit and tie you'll think he's a corporate guy, stiff and buttoned up. Take that same guy fully naked and he's just a human. Put him in a nudist vacation with others who are nude, and he'll feel confident and able to just be himself without the armor of clothing. When you can walk around naked in all of your truth there's power in that for people.”

The bottom line is that when you're free to explore – without judgement and within the confines of a safe, organized environment with other like-minded people – it can be very freeing and self-actualizing experience.

4 WAYS TO STRIP INHIBITIONS WITHOUT UNDESSING

Not quite ready to strip down and hit up the nude beach? There are still plenty of other ways you can release those inhibitions and harness a similar sense of freedom. Here are four places to start.

- 👉 **Discuss fantasies.** Permission-giving can be attained in other ways besides getting naked. Dr. Saltz says, “Discussing fantasies with a partner, discussing sexual ideas, having sexual play and being affirming about each of these also gives each other permission to be more sexual in a guilt-free, less inhibited way.”

- 👉 **Hit the Dance Club.** Dr. Hafeez says that dancing is a great way to connect to your body and, if a partner is there, a way to connect to theirs, as well.
- 👉 **Get Acquainted with Nature.** “Hiking and connecting with nature, taking in beautiful scenery, and going for a swim in a natural body of water like a river, lake or beach can be very freeing,” says Dr. Hafeez.
- 👉 **Take an Adventurous Vacation.** Step outside of your travel safety net and plan a trip that’s completely unlike anything you’ve done before. Maybe it’s a week spent camping in the Amazon jungle, a long weekend exploring the canyons of the great Southwest, or going skiing instead of snorkeling – just this once.

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