

I Got Naked At A Clothing-Optional, Adults-Only Resort

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When I was invited to spend four days at Hedonism II, a clothing-optional, adults-only resort in Jamaica, I knew immediately that I wanted to go. But not because of the nudity. I'd never been to Jamaica, or anywhere else in the Caribbean. As a Sagittarius moon, I was not going to turn down the opportunity to travel somewhere new, especially if I got to do so as part of my job. I told my editor that I would get naked for the story and tried not to think about the fact that I hadn't even worn a bikini since I was, oh, 11.

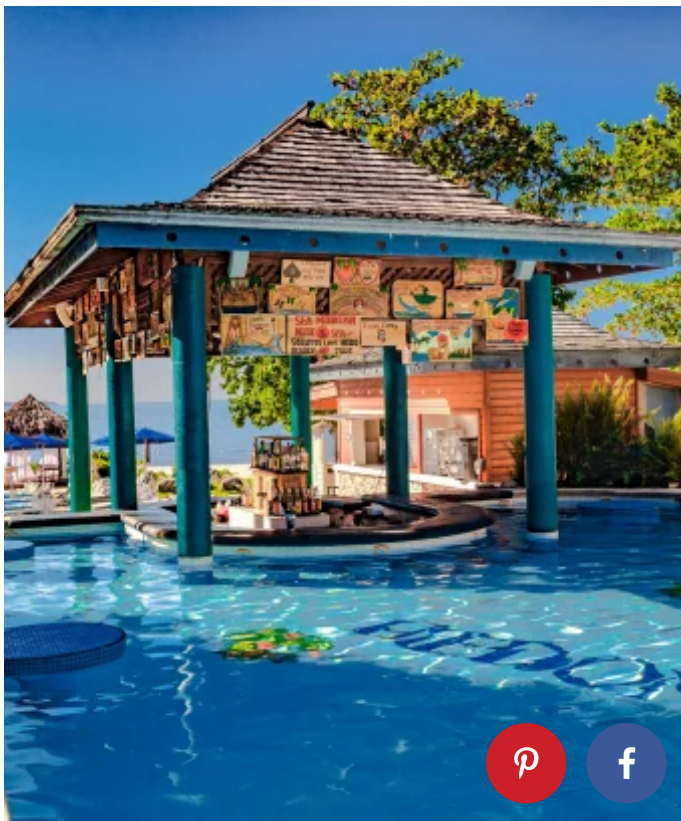


PHOTO: COURTESY HEDONISM II.

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See, I'm plus-size, [fat](#), chubby, curvy, whatever you want to call it (just not "fluffy," please). Most days, I'd say that I exist in the realm of [body neutrality](#) — meaning I might not always *love* my body, but usually, I'm okay with it. I aim for better feelings than that, and sometimes I achieve them. I don't count calories, I fill my [Instagram feed](#) with beautiful fat babes, I listen to [Lizzo](#), I shop at [Premme](#). But then a friend of a friend will grab my belly and ask when the baby's due, when the only thing in there is a burrito and I'm holding a beer in my hand. (Yes, that happened.) I'm on the smaller end of the plus-size spectrum, and there is a lot of [fatphobia](#) that others [experience](#) that I do not. But ever since I was a pre-teen, I've been aware that I'm bigger than many people around me think I should be. A lot of them have let me know it.

It's hard enough when it's strangers, but a couple years ago, an ex broke up with me by saying some incredibly cruel things about my body. My confidence plummeted for a long time after, and while it's slowly been climbing in the past year, I still had a long way to go. A [bikini](#) felt like a big step, but if I was going to [end up naked](#), I had to start somewhere. It'd be easier to go from one-piece to bikini to topless to naked than to skip those middle steps, right?

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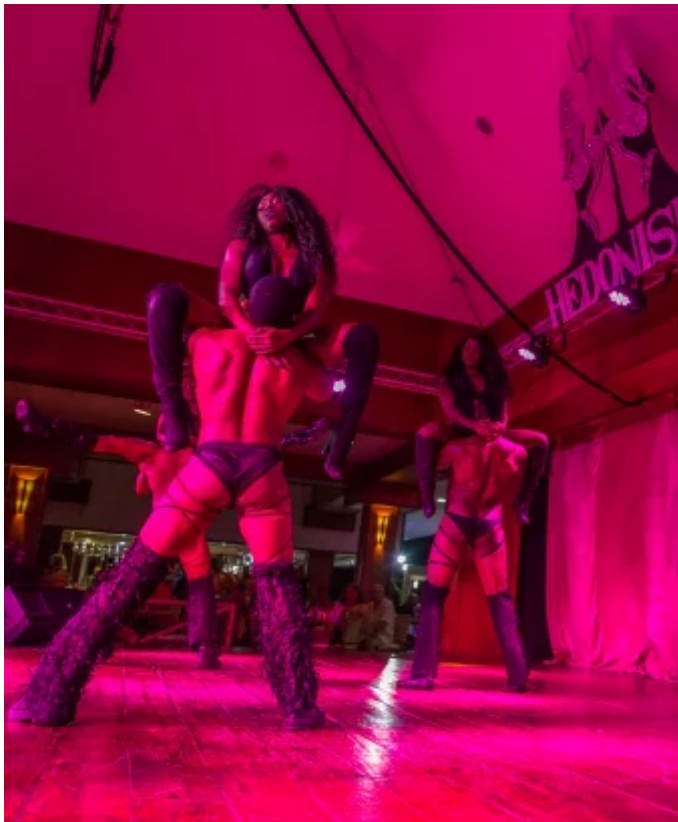


PHOTO: COURTESY HEDONISM II.



So I ordered a bright blue bikini from [ASOS](#). I didn't love what I saw in the mirror, but I put it in my suitcase anyway. Then I got on a plane to Jamaica, and a bus to [Negril](#).

After arriving at the resort, I was struck by how beautiful it was — the clear, blue ocean; sandy beaches; palm trees everywhere. It was humid enough to make my hair wave, but not so humid that I felt gross. As I settled in for a post-flight plate of [jerk chicken](#), I saw a naked man strolling across the beach. The fact that this was a [clothing-optional resort](#) suddenly felt real.

A few hours later, I watched Hedonism's nightly entertainment — this time a dance show featuring incredibly skilled performers showing

off sexy moves, entertainers executing airborne routines on curtains hung from the ceiling, and, for the finale, a choreographed milk bath. But while the dancers were ridiculously talented and gorgeous, I couldn't stop looking at the audience. People of all ages, sizes, and races rocked outfits they clearly felt amazing in — whether that meant a cute cocktail dress, a sheer teddy, or a collar and leash. Nobody was making fun of anyone or even looking at them sideways. I was surrounded by strangers in lingerie and fetish-wear, but the thing that felt the weirdest was the atmosphere of total acceptance.

Later that night, I joined a few other writers to check out a sex toy demonstration, only to find out that this was a *live* sex toy demonstration. That's right, I watched people try out dildos and a Sybian machine. Not only were people of various ages and sizes getting naked, they were actually using sex toys in front of an audience. And again, the atmosphere was one of total acceptance. Arousal? Sure. Curiosity? Definitely. Judgmental looks? Not at Hedon.

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Over the next few days, I saw people having sex in a pool and in an open-air cabana. I saw nude men and women walking around or lounging on



PHOTO: COURTESY HEDONISM II.

the beach without any sign of self-consciousness or insecurity. Again and again, I was more surprised by how comfortable people seemed, and how encouraging and accepting those around them were, than by all the sex and nudity going on. And then it was my turn to get naked.

Hedonism II is divided into two beaches: the Prude beach, where you can wear clothes or not, and the Nude beach, where nudity is

required. If you'd like to, you can stay on the Prude side the entire time, swimming in the ocean or chilling by the pool with a book and a pina colada (I read four and drank many). But I'd promised myself that I would experience the whole, well, *experience*. So after an afternoon of snorkeling in my bikini (success!), I joined some other women from the press group and headed to the nude beach — with the help of a shot or two. At the sign reading “No Clothing Beyond This Point,” we simultaneously stripped down. At first, I felt totally exposed and self-conscious. But within a few minutes, that feeling began to fade. Everyone on the entire beach was naked, after all, and nobody gave me a second glance. I even walked up to the bar and ordered a drink — totally naked. I kept thinking about the way I'd grown up, with strict school dress codes and Christian youth group admonishments to dress modestly. The me of 10 years ago would be astonished by the me of the present. It felt exhilarating.

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But while being naked in public felt liberating, it didn't feel particularly sexy. That came later that night, at the "toga foam party," which is exactly what it sounds like — a sexier, friendlier, more grown-up version of a frat party. The toga I was wearing showed a lot of side boob, and I was feeling self-conscious again. Until someone asked me to dance in the foam (Hedo is all about affirmative consent) and I discovered he was very into the side boob. And front boob. I know I shouldn't need to be showered in compliments about my body to feel sexy, but what can I say? It helps. And no, I didn't have sex, but I did make out on the beach, and it was a lot of fun. (And yes, he told me I could write about him.)

After that night, I didn't become the nakedest, most adventurous person at Hedo. I didn't volunteer for a sex toy demo or even participate in one of the nightly costume contests. But I did wear a sheer, hot pink bodysuit to the party on my last night — a bodysuit that had been in my dresser for two years but that I had never worn outside my own bedroom.

As I was told a few times, Hedonism means "pursuit of pleasure." Many people come to Hedo for the sex, or the nudity, or the parties. What I took away from the experience was the acceptance. For a few days, I existed in a world in which I heard only positive things about my body and bodies that look like mine, where I could show every inch of skin without questions or criticism. A world in which people could wear what they wanted to without judgment, and everyone believed that anything resembling sexual activity, even dancing, required consent. I

don't plan on having [public sex](#) anytime soon, but I hope that I can take some of the freedom and confidence I felt at Hedo with me forever. And I'll definitely wear that blue bikini again this summer.

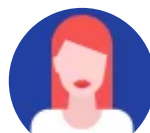
Hedonism II provided the press trip the writer of this story attended. However, Hedonism II did not approve or review this story.

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GETTING NAKED AT HEDONISM II RESORT, NEGRIL, JAMAICA

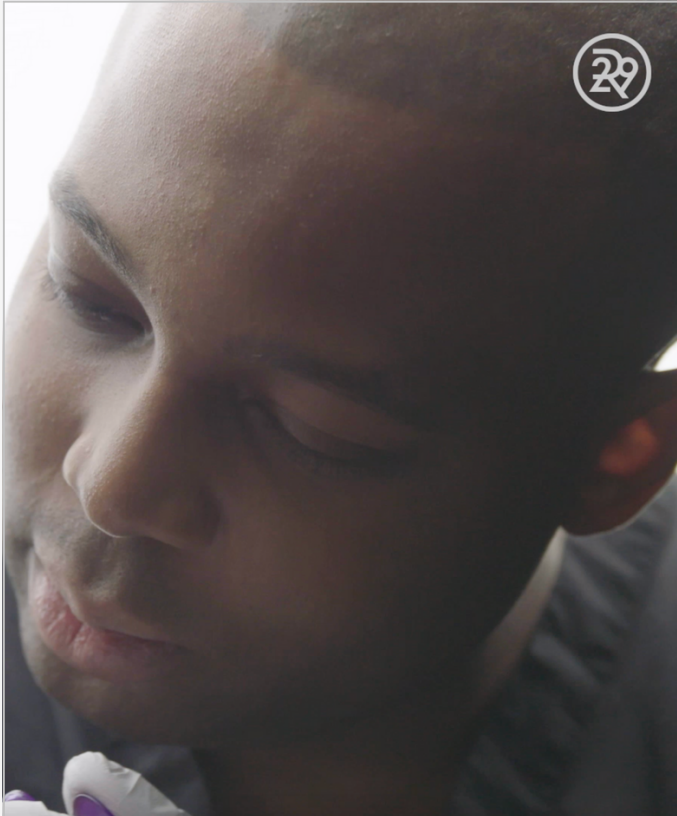
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