skyclad travel

THE FIELD GUIDE No. 2

Nudist, Naturist or Clothing-Optional?

What the Words Really Mean



You'll probably see at least one of these words on the resorts we list, on beach signs and in travel forums, and they're often used as if they mean the same thing. They overlap, but each one tells you something a little different. Knowing the difference helps you pick the right place and know what to expect when you arrive.

The short version:

- **Nudist** describes the *practice*: being nude.
- **Naturist** describes the *philosophy*: being nude in harmony with nature and with respect for others.
- **Clothing-optional** describes the *place*: what the rules allow.

Nudist: the practice

Nudism focuses on the act itself: removing your clothes, being comfortable that way, and doing it socially with others. Put simply, nudists just like being naked.

- **Where you'll hear it:** Mostly North America. In the U.S., "nudism" usually means nude recreation at private clubs or resorts set up for that purpose.
- **What to expect at a "nudist resort":** Usually, everyone is nude in common areas like the pool and clubhouse.
- **A bit of history:** One early American definition described a nudist as someone who goes without clothes whenever they can, and dresses only when comfort or the social setting calls for it.

Naturist: the philosophy

Naturism includes nudity but goes further. The International Naturist Federation (INF) adopted its official definition on August 5, 1974, at its World Congress in Agde, France:

> "Naturism is a way of life in harmony with nature characterised by the practice of communal nudity with the intention of encouraging self-respect, respect for others and for the environment."

- **Where you'll hear it:** Worldwide. It's the most common word in Europe and Canada, and the one international groups like the INF use.
- **The extra layer:** Naturism often comes with a closeness to nature, and sometimes environmentalism or healthy living. AANR's Western Region describes it as nudism emphasizing the practice of nudity, and naturism emphasizing harmony with nature and respect for the environment.

- **What it means for you:** You'll see "naturist" on resorts, campgrounds, beaches, clubs and travel groups around the world. Some use it for the full philosophy, others simply to mean nude-friendly. Explore the places that use it, and decide what it means to you.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> Both groups share the same core belief: the human body has dignity, and nudity isn't automatically sexual. Many people use the two words interchangeably.

Clothing-optional: the place

Clothing-optional isn't a philosophy or an identity. It describes a place, and it means you can be nude or clothed there, within that place's rules. It's up to you whether, when and how to undress.

- **Swimsuits are usually fine,** and so is going nude or removing only some clothing.
- **Remember to check the details.** Many clubs still don't allow clothing in their pools or spas, even when clothing is optional elsewhere. "Clothing-optional" also doesn't mean every restaurant, lobby or neighboring facility follows the same rule.
- **Best for:** First-timers, mixed groups and couples where one partner is still curious.

At a glance

	Nudist	Naturist	Clothing-optional
Describes	The practice	A philosophy and lifestyle	The rules of a place
Most common in	U.S.	Worldwide, especially Europe and Canada	Worldwide (resorts, beaches)
Nudity expected?	Usually, in common areas	Usually, in common areas	Your choice, within the rules
Swimsuits OK?	Usually not in pools	Usually not in pools	Usually yes, except some pools and spas
Good for first-timers?	Yes, with preparation	Yes, with preparation	Easiest place to start

More words you'll see

- **Textile:** What naturists call clothes-wearers, or places where clothing is required. Campsites are often labeled "naturist" or "textile".
- **Free beach:** A public nude beach with no membership needed. It can be **official** (recognized by the authorities), **unofficial** (tolerated by locals and police as long as everyone behaves) or **illegal**. **Field Guide No. 7, Naturist Beach Basics**, explains the difference.
- **Landed club:** A club with its own grounds, such as a clubhouse, pool or cabins, usually run by its members. In the U.S., these member-owned clubs usually call their members "nudists".
- **Non-landed club:** A travel club with no grounds of its own that meets at rented venues like hotels, pools and hot springs. These often use "naturist" in their names.

- **INF card:** A membership card from the International Naturist Federation or a national naturist group. Some European campsites ask for one, especially from **single men**, while others don't require it. Always check before you book.
- **AANR card:** A membership card from the American Association for Nude Recreation, the U.S. national naturist federation. Many affiliated clubs and resorts in North America give members a discount, and some ask for it.

How skyclad travel labels listings

Every listing on our map and country pages shows what kind of place it is:

- **Type.** Gold pin = resort, green = campground, blue = beach, purple = event.
- **Beach type.** Official nude beach, nude section of a larger beach, or traditional (tolerated). At tolerated beaches, be extra respectful and discreet.
- **Ages allowed.** Shown on featured venues (Family · 16+ · 18+ · 21+ · Couples only).

Whether nudity is expected or optional is set by each venue's own rules, so check its website before you go.

Which one is right for you?

- **Nervous first-timer?** Start with a **clothing-optional** resort or beach and go at your own pace.
- **Want community and a regular spot?** Try a **landed nudist club** near home.
- **Traveling in Europe?** Look for **naturist** campgrounds and official free beaches, and pack your INF card if you're traveling solo.
- **Traveling as a family?** Choose places that welcome families, and read their house rules.

Rules vary by venue and country. Always follow the posted rules of the place you visit, and local laws. skyclad travel never publishes nude images.