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THE FIELD GUIDE No. 5

Body Positivity

Leaving Self-Consciousness at the Gate



"I'd try it, but my body isn't ready." It's the most common thing people say about naturism, and it's also the thing regulars hear about least once someone has actually visited. This guide looks at what research says about social nudity and body image, and gives you practical ways to quiet the inner critic before, during and after your trip.

What the research says

Scientists have only recently started studying this, and the early findings are encouraging.

- **People who take part in naturism tend to be happier with their bodies and their lives.** Psychologist Keon West at Goldsmiths, University of London surveyed about 850 British people. Those who spent time naked around others liked their bodies more, thought

better of themselves and were more satisfied with their lives. The longer and more often they'd practiced naturism, the happier they were.

- **The effect shows up within a single day.** At two naturist events (24 people at "Bare All for Polar Bears" and 100 at British Naturism's Waterworld day), participants were assessed before undressing and again before getting dressed. Body image, self-esteem and life satisfaction all improved immediately and significantly.
- **The connection runs through body image.** The published study found that naturist activity predicted greater life satisfaction, and that this link worked through more positive body image and higher self-esteem.
- **The pattern holds for women and men.** A survey of 6,670 German adults found that people who had taken part in public clothes-free activities reported higher body appreciation, with no significant difference between genders.
- **It works by easing the fear of being judged.** Researchers found naturism predicted less "social physique anxiety," the worry that others are judging your body, and that this explained the boost in body appreciation.

> WORTH NOTING
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> This research is still young. The BBC describes the findings as promising, and notes that studies so far have found few negative effects of naturism. The same research separates naturism from other kinds of nudity, such as casual stripping or sexting, which may be harmful, particularly for women. The benefit comes from the **non-sexual, social** setting.

Why it works: real bodies, not filtered ones

Much body dissatisfaction comes from seeing too many "idealized" bodies in magazines, on TV and on social media. Naturism does the opposite: you spend the day among ordinary, varied bodies, learning what true respect looks like.

The surprising part is that **seeing other people naked seemed to matter more than being seen**. Being around real bodies helps people reset what they think is normal, acceptable and beautiful. After an afternoon by a naturist pool, the airbrushed version of a body starts to look like what it is: fiction.

> IT ISN'T ABOUT BEING "BODY BEAUTIFUL."
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> British Naturism describes naturism as being about body confidence, not a perfect body. You'll see people of all shapes, sizes and ages, including people with scars, cellulite, mastectomies and artificial limbs.

Before your trip: start small

- **Practice at home.** Get used to it gradually, for example in your own backyard or at a quiet beach.
- **Go about your normal routine.** Naturists suggest doing your usual daily routine without clothes, and not dressing right after a shower.
- **Take a short break from social media.** In one study, teenagers who cut back on social media for three weeks felt better about their appearance and weight.
- **Don't "get ready" for it.** You don't need to diet, tan or groom for a naturist visit. Even grooming is personal choice; one resort manager calls it "about body acceptance".

On the day: easing in

- **Pick a quiet time and corner.** Visiting off-peak or starting in a less crowded spot can ease the transition, and breathing exercises can help with nerves.
- **Use your towel or sarong as a bridge.** Drape it when you sit and tie it when you stand. Most people stop bothering surprisingly quickly.
- **Remember: nobody is grading you.** People notice newcomers because they're new, not because they're naked. With clothes and labels gone, people focus on your friendliness, humor and attitude.
- **Get busy.** A swim, a walk, a game of pétanque or a book. Once your hands and mind are occupied, self-consciousness fades.

Reframe the inner critic

When you think…	Try this instead
"Everyone will notice my stomach / scars / stretch marks."	Everyone else is thinking about their own. And look around: bodies like yours are everywhere.
"I need to lose weight first."	Naturists come in every shape and size. There's no entry requirement.
"I'm too old."	People of all ages take part. Many regulars are retirees.
"People will judge me."	Naturism is described as a community that welcomes people without prejudice or ridicule.
"What if I hate it?"	Then you get dressed. Clothing-optional venues let you go at your own pace.

After your trip: keep the feeling

- **Notice the difference.** Write down how you felt about your body before and after. Many people are surprised.
- **Make it a habit.** Benefits grew with regular practice, though they seemed to level off at about 20 naturist events a year. Regular visits help, and you don't need to go every weekend.
- **Bring it home.** Carry the "real bodies" mindset into daily life: unfollow accounts that make you feel worse, and talk about your body more kindly.

A note on comfort and boundaries

Body positivity doesn't mean you have to feel great every minute. Some days you'll want a sarong, and that's fine. Respecting your own comfort is part of the same mindset as respecting everyone else's. If body image is causing you real distress, a counselor or doctor can help, and naturism can sit alongside that support.

BODY CONFIDENCE QUICK CARD

screenshot this

1. Real bodies, not filtered ones: look around
2. No prep required: no diet, tan or grooming needed
3. Start small: backyard, quiet corner, off-peak hours
4. Your towel and sarong are your bridge
5. People notice the newcomer, not the body
6. Stay busy: swim, walk, read, play
7. Come back. Confidence builds with every visit.

This article is for general information and isn't medical or mental-health advice. Always follow the posted rules of the place you visit, and local laws. skyclad travel never publishes nude images.