



© Giovanni Monterzino | Alamy Stock Photo, © Matthew Micah Wright | Getty Images, © KompasKendide | Shutterstock

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

AFRICA

Anse Source d'Argent
Cape Maclear
Bazaruto Archipelago
Devil's Pool
Camps Bay Beach

AMERICAS

The Exumas
Arenal Hot Springs
Queen's Baths
Lençóis Maranhenses
Semuc Champey
Blue Lagoon
Moosehead Lake
Dos Ojos Cenote
Hamilton Pool Preserve
Crater Lake National Park
Havasus Falls
Lake Powell
Sac Actun

ASIA

Dead Sea
Beppu
Radhanagar Beach

04 Raja Ampat Islands
River Ganges, Rishikesh
Kinosaki Onsen
08 Hawaiyat Najm
12 (Bimmah Sinkhole)
14 Snorkelling the Sardine Run
18 Ma'in Hot Springs
22 Big Lagoon
Beitou
Wadi Shab

EUROPE

26
30 Pamukkale
34 Golden Beach (Altin Kum)
36 Punting on the Cam
40 Bad Gastein
44 Hampstead Heath Bathing Ponds
48 Grotta Azzurra
50 Lantic Bay
54 Széchenyi Baths
56 Fell Centre Kiilopää
60 St Nectan's Glen
64 Thermae Bath Spa
66 Balos Beach
Llyn Cau
72 Mývatn Nature Baths
76 Forty Foot
80 Cala Goloritzè

84 Spiaggia di Porto Ghiacciolo
88 Saturnia
92 St Peter's Pool
Bay of Kotor
96 Fairy Pools
100 Sandwood Bay
104 Lake Bled Island Pilgrimage
108 Punta Paloma
112 Ystradfellte Waterfalls
116 Elafonisi Beach

OCEANIA

122 Jellyfish Lake
126 Bay of Fires
128 Limu Pools
132 Bell Gorge
136 Drift River Snorkelling
140 Bondi Icebergs Club
144 Mataranka Thermal Pool
148 Ningaloo Reef
152 Whitehaven Beach
154 Aitutaki Lagoon
158 Abel Tasman National Park
160 To Sua Ocean Trench

INDEX

268

INTRODUCTION

Wherever my wanderings take me around the globe, big city to remote backcountry, I have a few things I need to do to feel I have truly experienced a destination.

One of these is to swim: in whatever body of water that place presents me with.

When I lived in North London, it was often a de-stressing dunk in one of the ponds scattered across Hampstead Heath. On work trips to Budapest, a near obligation was soaking in the thermal baths for which that city is renowned. And hiking across northwest Scotland, however icy the temperature, a plunge off a lonely beach like Sandwood Bay made an outing there complete.

It was not for bravado or to honour some rite of passage that I felt this need. It was as if by indulging in these wild swims I was wallowing in that place's primordial essence; delving as deep into its soul as was possible. Climbers go through something similar, as do cavers, as do divers: ascending or descending so far that a different world starts to envelop them. Yet a dip in our planet's waters rarely requires specialist equipment, save perhaps some gumption. And once immersed, it is an absolute sensory experience: you smell it, you hear it, it touches every inch of you. It is the easiest way to throw yourself into nature's great unknowns.

Surveys show similar findings. A 2013 study on happiness in natural environments, conducted by

professors at a couple of British universities, collated responses from 20,000 participants in varying locations and found coastal and marine environments aroused the greatest joy of any. History concurs. For centuries we have been going to the seaside, taking to the waters at spas or splashing in rivers and lakes for our well-being. When we are around water, it tends to bring us out in smiles and often in shrieks of laughter.

The 68 watery locales featured in this book will conjure other emotions beside elation. On the dreamy beaches of Mozambique's Bazaruto Archipelago, it could be pure peace. Healing properties in mineral waters at Bad Gastein in Austria purportedly cure certain ailments. Snorkelling Australia's Ningaloo Reef, you might feel sheer awe at the diverse surrounding sea life.

These places will hopefully whet your appetite for all things aquatic. But this book has another aim: to raise awareness of the best spots to enjoy water, our most precious resource, so that they are preserved for future generations.

The book is divided into five chapters by continent: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Readers can discover new places in each part of the world to splash in, soak up or simply stare out at the water, as well as remembering places they have already been – and hope to return to. ~ **Luke Waterson**



Extra Adrenaline Kicks

If a leap into Devil's Pool has you raring for more adventure, you'll find plenty of action around the falls. Take the 111m (364ft) leap on a bungee jump from the Victoria Falls bridge into the Zambezi River, or get wet on a white-water rafting trip down the river with Grade 5 rapids.



Pigs Might... Swim?

In recent years the swimming pigs of the Bahamas have become a huge tourist attraction, though it's thought these wild pigs may have been stranded on the island (Big Major Cay) for over a decade. They have become skilled swimmers and will swim out to boats in search of food

On Location

It's commonly thought that *The Blue Lagoon* was filmed here, but while some scenes from the controversial flick (which sees two shipwrecked cousins forge a sexual relationship) were shot in Jamaica, the lagoon scenes were actually filmed in a Mediterranean lagoon that lies between the Maltese island of Comino and the islet of Cominotto.





© Hitesh Savlani | Getty Images, © Daniel Ludowski | Getty Images (following page)



HAWAIYAT NAJM (BIMMAH SINKHOLE)

Take a refreshing dip in one of Oman's most accessible – and unusual – natural swimming holes.

Sinkholes are often created by groundwater eating away at limestone and carbonate. Caverns form as the minerals dissolve, and eventually the ground above caves in. In Oman's northeast, just off the highway between the villages of Dībāb and Bimmah, there's a particularly beautiful example of this natural phenomenon.

Better known as Bimmah Sinkhole, Hawaiyat Najm has a sparkling, semi-circular blue-green pool at its base, its idyllic hue attributed to the mixing of mineral-rich fresh water from underground rivers and the saline water of the ocean just 600m (1968ft) away. A concrete staircase leading down to the pool detracts from the natural beauty of the 50m- (164ft-) wide sinkhole somewhat, but it also makes access a cinch. It's possible to jump into the water from a low cliff on the opposite side of the pool, though the water is not deep enough to safely jump from the top of the sinkhole, which rises 20m (65ft) above the water's surface.

Country Oman • **Region** Muscat Governorate • **Type** natural spring • **Family friendly** yes

Escape the Oman heat with a cool dip in this breathtaking natural phenomenon

THE JOY OF WATER

How do I get here?

The sinkhole is located about 85 minutes' drive south of Muscat along the main coast road. If you're not keen to hire a car, it's possible to book a tour from the capital.

Is there a good time to come?

Easy accessibility means the sinkhole can get quite busy, especially on weekends, so aim for a weekday in the early morning or late afternoon for more privacy.

Is it OK to wear a bikini?


While it's acceptable to wear a modest bikini at Oman's touristy swimming spots, it's respectful to cover up (a T-shirt and shorts is fine) as soon as you get out of the water.

Is there any marine life in the sinkhole?

Dangle your feet in the pool for a free fish pedicure. If you stand still in the water for a few minutes, the tiny fish will nibble the rest of your body, too.


Is there anything else to do here?

No, making it a great stop on a day trip from Muscat to Wadi Shab.

A wide-angle photograph of a natural rock pool. The water is exceptionally clear, showing a vibrant turquoise color near the bottom where numerous rocks and pebbles are visible. The pool is nestled within a cave-like structure with layered, brownish-grey rock walls. A person is swimming in the shallower part of the pool, their arms outstretched. The lighting is bright, creating strong reflections on the water's surface and highlighting the textures of the rock formations.

The Falling Star

The sinkhole's Arabic name translates as 'the falling star'. The name was derived from the long-held view that the sinkhole was created by an ancient meteorite.



Other Great Kimberley Swimming Gorges

Emma Gorge Possibly the prettiest plunge pool in the East Kimberley.

Galvans Gorge Right by the Gibb, lily-fringed and protected by a *wandjina* (powerful Indigenous rock-art figure).

Sir John Gorge Lovely water, and the red rocks turn the colour of molten lava at sunset.



"I like Icebergs, you can get into your laps because there are lanes. It's a proper 50m (164ft) Olympic swimming pool, unlike most of the other ocean pools where in summer it's a free-for-all of kids and paddlers and everyone else cutting you off."

*Bob Scott,
local Icebergs swimmer*

Play it Safe

Gorgeous as it is here, visitors still need to exercise caution: the ladder can be slippery, and attempting to swim through the underwater passage that feeds the waterhole is incredibly dangerous. Travelling with kids? Beware the child-sized gaps in the fence that encircles the top of the trench.

