



# Discovering Naturism

*A short essay on discovering the joys of Naturism, what is it, it's benefits, etiquette, ways to enjoy it, what it is not, plus a short history.*

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### Introduction

This short essay will explore the many benefits of the Naturist lifestyle and the reasons behind those benefits.

It is designed to encourage you to experience Naturism for the Naturist life cannot be fully understood from an intellectual point of view but only experientially.

Our journey and discovery started but a few short years ago and our only regret has been that we did not partake fully of this lifestyle years ago.

This essay draws heavily from the large body of literature, magazines and webpages on this subject and hopefully we have covered the majority of these in the further reading section that lists the books and resources that we have acquired and forms my modest Naturist library, plus magazine articles and selected Internet resources.

Finally we would like to thank the many Naturists that we have met along this journey so far, people who share the values of the Naturist philosophy.

*Stuart and Lucia Whelan*





### **What is this thing called Naturism?**

Naturism is a lifestyle that seeks to engender respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment by the practice of social nudity.

From the above it can be seen that taking ones clothes off is a means to attain the aforementioned qualities.

Our society has so conditioned us that we are different to each other that we lose touch with who we really are. We are measured in this society by what work we do, what we have and what we wear.

By stripping away the symbols of these trappings we can make a number of important observations.

First and foremost that we are all fundamentally the same.

This immediately opens a subconscious feeling of empathy. An example of this is when visiting a clothing optional beach one may observe a person who was obviously involved in the biker culture complete with motor cycle club tattoos. If dressed in his leathers he would have made an imposing and threatening sight.

However stripped of his uniform we had the opportunity to see him as a man and not a biker.

We all wear uniforms, the uniform of the city worker, the blue collar worker, the student, etc and within those generalizations there are uniforms of specific professions.

Yet strip those away and we have the pinnacle of creation, the human being. If we could remember our similarities rather than our differences then the world would be a better place.

We get a taste of this experience in a Naturist setting and that is why the social aspect of Naturism can be such a positive one.

Tolerance is also a hallmark of a Naturist due to this same experience of empathy with others we see that we all make choices through life's journey and having experienced being part of a minority group within society this also allows an appreciation of the struggles of other minorities whether we agree with them or not.

Finally we have the Naturist's relationship with the environment which is appreciated so fully with all our senses turned out and free of the confines of clothing.

The absence of clothing allows our greatest sense organ, our skin, to work without impediment.

We feel the breeze, the warmth of the sun and open to fully experience this tactile world. Having experienced it we feel more a part, more connected with the environment and thus we can have a greater respect for it.

The really powerful aspect of the Naturist philosophy however the ability to take these experiences and bring them into everyday life.

I'm not talking about going to work naked not many of us can do that unfortunately, but taking the lessons learnt and applying them into everyday life we become a full time Naturist even in a textile world. One way to look at it is "hey, I'm naked under these clothes!" so why would I need to change my Naturist attitude to life?

So Naturism is a life philosophy which is practiced by partaking in social nudity.

### **Is there a difference between a Naturist, a Nudist or a Skinny-Dipper?**

All enjoy the freedom from clothes or coverings and quite often in a social setting so from an outsiders view there appears little if any difference.

In our experience, particularly in regards to the Naturist and Nudist these terms are often used interchangeably. The difference we feel is as much in the mind of the practitioner as it is in the observer.

From our conversations with others who enjoy going clothes-free we would propose the following in today's Australian context:

**The Naturist** - will seek to be clothes free at every appropriate opportunity and holds to the philosophy, as previously described, that provides a framework of meaning for enjoying the naked activity.

**The Nudist** - will also seek to be clothes free at every appropriate opportunity but purely because they enjoy the experience and that is enough to meet their needs.

Finally the **Skinny-Dipper**, this person just enjoys to swim and sun bathe clothes-free. They confine their clothes free activity to the beach or pool and spa.

And all of the above are valid and share the important aspect, that is the clothes free lifestyle is enjoyable!

So whether you would like to consider yourself a Naturist, Nudist or a Skinny-Dipper revel in the enjoyment of your clothes-free time and be proud of your pastime or lifestyle choice.

### **Taking the first step or Yikes I'm naked won't people look at me?**

Probably the most powerful and positive experience in a Naturist lifestyle is that first occasion when you remove your clothes in public.

I say this because for most this event is so clearly remembered.

In my case it was on a clothing optional beach. A few weeks previous I had decided that and I wanted to experience being naked on a public beach.

When it came to the day I was a little apprehensive but finally, after some stalling tactics, I went down to the beach set my towel up and dropped my clothes and with those clothes I dropped a sense of tension, stress and I guess also convention.

The experience was such a positive one psychologically and also physiologically, the physical senses opened up and it was like experiencing the beach and seaside for the first time. I could feel the breeze on my whole body, the sun's warmth all over, even the sand beneath my feet it all felt different.

Surprisingly I quickly lost that sense of " Yikes .... " as I walked down to the water's edge and looked out to beautiful Sydney harbour with the sail craft, ferries and other leisure craft gracing it's surface. What a feeling!

Since then I have enjoyed many clothes-free days on what is arguably one of the best clothing optional beaches in Australia, Cobblers Beach. With each experience of being clothes-free one feels more and more natural, as it should.

The benefits are both physical and psychological and that is why we are such advocates of the lifestyle.

### **Etiquette**

Here are some things that the new Naturist needs to know when it comes to social nudity and some common questions that you may have.

#### **It is ok to look just don't stare.**

Yes we all "look" the difference is that, as there is nothing to hide and play with the senses, you look at a person's body in its entirety and then naturally engage that person without giving their body any further consideration.

Compare this with the effect that a woman with a very low cut dress has on the male psyche. The typical male will be enticed by the appealing cleavage and will constantly check to see if something more of the breasts are exposed.

This allure is removed in a Naturist setting and so also is the objectification so we can relate more fully and without distraction.

#### **Use a "sit-upon" when seated.**

A "sit-upon" is a unique and yet practical part of Naturism. The item itself is nothing more than a towel, either large or small which is placed over chairs or lounges, particularly if they are owned by others.

It has become common practice and provides a barrier between yourself and what you are seated on.

The only "method of deployment" is to have a way to check that you have the same side up each time the towel is used.

Simplicity itself.

### **What if I get aroused?**

For men often the greatest concern is an unwanted erection. In practice this very rarely occurs as the circumstances are different in a Naturist setting than a bedroom setting.

If this is of concern then confidence can be gained by first practicing being naked at home you will soon find that one needs a certain state of mind for an aroused state to occur.

Men are not driven by instinct alone context is just as important. For example having your genitals examined by a female doctor in a clinic, is unlikely to produce an aroused response. The same way one doesn't get a raging erection when an attractive woman walks in to a business meeting.

Therefore the context of a Naturist setting does not get one primed for sexual union.

For the sake of completeness if one does find oneself with an erection then there is no problem, simply cover up until it abates. The key is not to flaunt it, if you start parading around then you will be asked to leave.

However, fear not, as mentioned above given the context there is little likelihood of a spontaneous erection.

As an aside, in recent times, and predominately through the Internet there has been an association between swinging couples and Naturists. The Naturist is about enjoying the experience of being clothes free in a non-sexual manner.

I have had it from a reliable source that given the choice swingers will generally keep their clothes on except for when trying to be provocative. They are after the sexual experience not the experience of being clothes free.

### **What if I am having my period?**

Menstruation is natural and accepted as a normal part of life among Naturists. Many women wear a bikini bottom or shorts during their period, others prefer to just wear a tampon, trim the cord and stay naked. No one will mind either way.

### **Do not touch!**

Being naked is not an invitation to be touched. It is no different than in clothed company, you don't go up to someone that you have just met and caress their back or chest. The same goes for the Naturist setting we need to respect people's private space.

### **Common misconceptions**

Sometimes when asked non-Naturists will make a comment along the lines of "who wants to see all those fat, old, wrinkly.... people naked!" in that one comment they have missed the whole point of Naturism.

We do not take our clothes off for others, we take them off for ourselves!

That is why it is such an affirming experience, it is not what others think, it is what feels right for us, that is the pivotal thing.

Once this is experienced, one's attitude changes, for example seeing a woman who has had a breast surgically removed and yet is comfortable enough with her body to be naked in social setting. One can have nothing but admiration and it is a privilege to meet such a person.

Likewise some scars can be quite confronting and yet why should someone who wishes to do so, be denied the opportunity to go clothes free.

The true Naturist setting provides a rare opportunity to be yourself in a non-judgmental environment. Of course the opportunity also exists to provide that same accepting environment for those around you too.

This is both affirming and liberating and adds to the psychological benefits of the lifestyle.

### **What sort of people are Naturists?**

You will find that Naturists come from all walks of life, and be all ages, and from all professions, dentists, soldiers, doctors, clergymen, office staff, builders, trades people, teachers, nurses etc.

In fact you'll find people just like you!

You may find that people you meet, especially for the first time, will talk in generalities when referring to their professions, as some people are concerned that if their employer or colleagues knew of their Naturist lifestyle they may be disadvantaged because of ignorant attitudes.

Likewise people generally will go by first names only.

Hopefully these attitude of secrecy will change as we become a more tolerant society that embraces diversity and when the message gets disseminated more widely that nude recreation is not about sexual activity.

### **How do I introduce my partner into Naturism?**

Quite often it is that man that finds the joy of Naturism first and then introduces his partner. It should not be under estimated the barriers to going clothes free that women can face. A woman may be self-conscious around body image, and the fear of appearing nude in social settings having experienced sexual objectification and attacks on their self-esteem.

Therefore the best advice is not to force the issue, discuss Naturism and explain that the experience is a sensual one and not a sexual one.

Suggest that you both spend time nude in and around the home so that your partner can experience being clothes free in a safe environment.

When you are ready to nude in public, do some research, make sure that you pick a family friendly clothes optional beach, or better yet a controlled environment such as a B&B or Resort that is clothing optional.

Let the proprietors know that it is the first time for your partner and most places will go out of their way to ensure that her first experience is a good one.

### **I have noticed a lot of people remove their Pubic hair.**

Just as some men have beards and others are clean shaven, it is a personal preference as to what you do with your pubic hair.

Some leave it natural, some trim it and others shave it all off.

You will find all three styles among Naturists, although the smooth (shaved) look is popular at the moment, as it is generally in society, there are plenty of others that keep it natural.

### **What if I have body decorations?**

Body piercings (nipple, navel or genital) and tattoos are popular with some Naturists. In clothed society these are kept hidden however in a Naturist setting they are on display.

If you have them there is no need to feel concerned as it is recognised that it is your personal choice to decorate your body and this decision is respected.

### **Showing signs of affection.**

In years gone by there was a concern that people should not show signs of outward affection in a Naturist setting.

Fortunately this is not the case now as common sense applies, non-sexual touching and signs of affection are natural and really it is the same as in a clothed social setting..

If in doubt consider as to what actions are acceptable ask yourself, would you act this way on a crowded train station or other public place, if yes, then you can do it in a Naturist setting.

### **Photographs**

In the age of digital cameras and mobile phones, cameras are everywhere. In a Naturist setting the one rule is ask. If you plan to take shots of your partner and others are in the background even if they are some distance away, ask their permission.

It is just courtesy to say to people that you are planning to take some photos in the area and confirm that you will not include them.

### **Doesn't being nude all the time lower your sex drive?**

Not at all, being naked is has no effect on one's sex life except for possibly a positive one.

In the book *Nudist Society* - by William Hartman, Marilyn Fithian & Donald Johnson (*Revised Edition: Los Angeles: Elysium Growth Press, 1991*) their research indicated that Naturists/Nudists tend to have a better sex life.

Specifically to a question regarding sexual happiness in life after becoming involved in nudism, the results were surprisingly equal between men and women:

**"increased greatly" : 10.2 %,**  
**"increased somewhat": 28.1%,**

*"remained the same": 48.3%,  
"decreased" : 2.1%.*

Therefore overall, more than one third of both male & female nudists are convinced that nudism has contributed positively to their sexual happiness.

### **Where can you be clothes free?**

This largely depends where you live. The general answer is legal nude or clothing optional beaches, Naturist/Nudist Clubs and finally Naturist/Nudist resorts and B&B's.

Generally on private property as long as you are not in sight of members of the public. Thus unless one has a very private yard the opportunity to go clothes free outdoors is limited.

Each country, state or territory will have different laws and so it makes sense to check these out before disrobing.

The law in some jurisdictions can sometimes be confusing as it has been held in some courts that the nude body is not in and of itself obscene the issue is if the person causes offense as a "flasher" would. Therefore if you are on a lonely stretch of beach and are not doing anything obscene then if arrested you should be able to mount a case in your defence.

### **What happens if I see someone I know?**

A common question and one that is easily answered. Say Hello!

Now you both have a shared interest and it is likely that will extend the friendship.

It is interesting that it is easier to be around strangers when you are naked than around long standing friends and relatives.

I had this situation happen when my adult son came to stay with us. He was aware that we were a clothing optional house and I did say to him that while he was always welcome to stay over for a protracted period of time it was likely that during his stay I normally would be naked and I asked if this was ok with him.

He said it was and as it turned out for the first week it was unseasonably cold so it was not an issue the following week I realized that I had some hesitation appearing naked but I have discovered just how much more comfortable I am naked and I made a conscious decision that I would just do what I would normally do.

Soon after that decision I was standing naked and comfortable in the kitchen when my son came out for breakfast.

My wife, who is my son's step mother, on the other hand did not feel that she could do that and that was fine.

What this experience did teach me, is again it is all about personal freedom and while I would have respected my son's wishes if he had asked me not to be naked while he was staying over, the bridge I had to cross was more a mental one of my own creation.

After the first time it wasn't an issue for either of us.

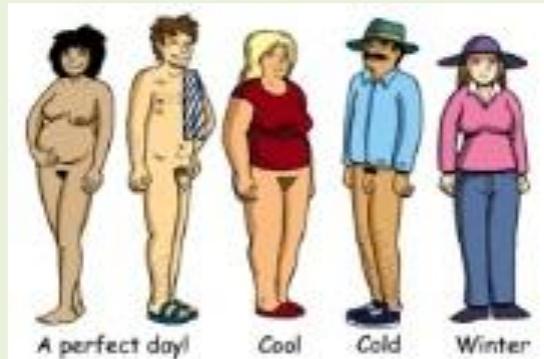
### What does a Naturist wear in cold weather?

There is an old joke that goes; What does a Naturist wear then it is cold? The answer is clothes we are Naturists not stupid!

Having said that there are a few things as guidelines that you will find in a Naturist setting.

As it gets cooler the first thing you put on is a top. The majority of one's body heat is lost from the body's core, and it is surprising how comfortable you can become just by putting on a tee shirt.

Here is a guide drawn by Stephen Crowley to illustrate the way Naturists cater for the cold it was put together for Bare Oaks Family Naturist Park in Canada.



As everyone's body runs at a slightly different thermostat your comfort should be your primary concern, so you should not suffer the cold because you ascribe to Naturist values.

### What about sun protection, we are told to avoid the sun not expose our whole body?

As Naturists enjoy time outdoors they are very aware of the effects of the sun on their body and therefore they will wear sunscreen, hat and sun glasses and seek shade in the middle of the day. As in the question above, common sense should prevail and if you think you are getting too much sun then put on a tee-shirt.

However there is also a body of evidence that suggests that the public health authorities have been too effective in their advertising campaign and we are now scared to expose ourselves to sun at all. Therefore we are now, as a population, suffering from Vitamin D deficiency which exposes us to increased risk of breast and bowel cancers. (*The Vitamin D Solution – Michael F Holick Ph.D. M.D Published by Penguin Group 2010*) Like all things moderation and common sense is the key.

### Naturist fancy dress parties.

A popular pastime for the social Naturist is a theme night which often involves fancy dress.

While this may seem contradictory there are various approaches to creating a costume.

Obviously headdress is one area that gets attention. Hats, wigs, tiaras etc. Then there see-through tops and dresses plus props such as Bow Ties, Boa's, gloves, necklaces and other jewellery.

Body paint is also a possibility but for mainly outside events like beach days or BBQs due to the risk of paint transfer and mess.

Lastly there are "sexy clothes" , suspender-belts and stockings and other more risqué items.

These sometimes find their way into the Naturist fancy dress but unlike a textile environment where they are worn in a provocative manner exposing more flesh than in usual social settings, these accoutrements are seen as a bit of "naughty" fun which is tempered by the social acceptable behaviours of a Naturist setting.

It is interesting, from a social experiment type basis, the effects of social conditioning. When you see someone who you have spent considerable time in a naked setting suddenly in scanty lingerie. The mind does a double-take as the previous comfortable boundaries are challenged.

Again these effects are short lived as the body is just accepted for what it is and quite often the fancy dress is lost after an hour or so as people prefer to relax clothes free.

For those new to Naturism a general rule would be these more risqué items are best only worn when you know the people at the party well as they can still sometimes be misconstrued.

### **A short history.**

For most of human history, nudity was a natural and normal part of life. People were nude when environment and conditions favoured it.

The "bathing suit" is a very recent invention dating back only about a century. It is only with the advent of scientific advancement and industrialization that humans began to be ashamed of their bodies. As we began to replace the natural world with manufactured goods, we grew to see all that was not man-made as imperfect. The human body became an object of shame to be hidden and shaped by clothing.

The beginning of modern Naturism can generally be traced to the late part of the 19th and early 20th century in Germany and it spread then through Europe and to England. It was during this time that the health benefits of sunshine on the human body were re-discovered and the practice of taking "air baths" was becoming more common.

In these early days total nudity was often compulsory and total prohibition on alcohol and tobacco with the practice of vegetarianism and gymnastics ( it is interesting that the "gym" comes from the Greek "gymnos" meaning naked as in ancient times that is how physical activity was done.

Thus this nude healthy lifestyle movement was called Naturism as it reflected a more natural engagement with our environment.

Many people decided that the practice was not as attractive as the theory, but while some of them deserted the cause completely, others noticed that the social nudity had a positive psychological effect which they all appreciated.

When people removed their cultural body armour they felt freer and less stressed than during their everyday lives. People were who they were, not what they pretended to be behind their textile uniforms, jewellery, and makeup.

This relaxed social ambiance became the hallmark of twentieth century social Naturism / Nudism.

In Australia when the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay they found the Aboriginals naked and unashamed, sensibly attired for the warm Australian climate.

However, those early settlers had brought their good old English morality with them, they knew better than the locals. It was indecent to be nude according to them.

Apparently though, some of the British soldiers found the weather and the white sandy beaches just too tempting and often went swimming in the surf naked.

In 1833, “to preserve decency” the Governor put a stop to that. He banned sea bathing completely during daylight hours. It was not until 1902, after a lot of civil disobedience and many arrests, that this law was finally revoked.

Over the following decades people slowly found more and more freedom from the full “bathing costumes” of the time with arms and legs being slowly revealed until the 1930’s where what we consider the first modern bathing suits were accepted on public beaches.

The first Naturist/Nudist clubs in Australia were formed in the 1930’s and rose in popularity post World War II with soldiers particularly those who served in the Pacific having experienced skinny-dipping and wanting to re-discover the experience.

Thus clubs had a period of growth in the 1950’s and then again in the late 1960’s through to the early 80’s when a more liberal attitude to the human body was accepted. Nudity was on prime time TV with the soap “Number 96” and “The Box”. Pix and Post magazines were showing top free photographs of models and similar photos of a “Page 3” girl in the afternoon newspapers.

This was also the period of the free beach culture and politicians decided to designate legal nude bathing beaches, the first being in South Australia at Maslin Beach in February 1975. Other States followed suit and it was expected that more and more clothing optional beaches would be proclaimed.

Who would have thought that the late 1990’s and into the 2000’s would bring a swing to a more conservative attitude and unfortunately the momentum and tolerance of the naked body has not been forthcoming. It harks back to the original attitudes of the first British settlers that in what is the most suitable climate for nude recreation that being Queensland is still without a legal clothing optional beach.

### **Further reading.**

Following is a list of the books that make up our small Naturist library and we acknowledge the information gleaned from these and other resources that we have drawn upon for this small essay. However any errors made are ours and not ascribed to these resources.

*Books* (in no particular order)

A Brief History of Nakedness – Philip Carr-Gomm

Among the Nudists (Early Naturism) – Frances & Mason Merrill

Nudist Idea – Cec Cinder Ph.D

Nudist Society – William E Hartman, Marilyn Fithian and Donald Johnson

Nakedness – “The first Nudist Book” – Richard Ungewitter – A study and first English translation with Introduction and notes by Cec Cinder.

Naked Fear – Dennis Craig Smith

Growing up without shame – Dennis Craig Smith

Nudism in Australia – Magnus Clarke

I'll catch the sun – Richard Langdon Cook

Naked People – Heinrich Scham

Bare facts – Les and Jan Hotchkin

The Nudists – Donald Johnson

Nakedness and the Bible – Paul M Bowman

Nudity and Christianity – Jim Cunningham

Therapy, Nudity and Joy – Aileen Goodson

Nudity – Ruth Barcan

The Vitamin D Solution – Michael F Holick Ph.D. M.D

### *Magazines*

Australian Sun & Health

The Australian Naturist (TAN)

Australian Naturist Federation (ANF) Newsletters

Health & Efficiency (UK)

Nude & Natural (USA)

Gonatural (NZ)

### *A small selection of websites and online resources:*

Aussie Naturists (forums) – [www.aussienaturists.com](http://www.aussienaturists.com)

Aust. Naturist Federation (links to clubs & resorts) - [www.aus-nude.org.au](http://www.aus-nude.org.au)

Australian Sun & Health - [www.ozsh.com.au](http://www.ozsh.com.au)

TAN Magazine - [www.naturist.net.au](http://www.naturist.net.au)

Free Beach Australia – [www.freebeach.com.au](http://www.freebeach.com.au)

Sydney Nudist Info - <http://www.sydneynudistinfo.com/>

*Podcast:*

The Naturist Living Show – <http://naturistliving.bareoaks.ca>



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