

## TRIPPING

# If you can't afford the price of entry, try the beach

*Sometimes things don't go as planned – and those moments often make for the best stories. Tripping columns offer readers a chance to share their wild adventures from the road.*

**RICHARD TAYLOR**  
SOLDIER'S BAY, ANTIGUA

**A**t the beach, when I mentioned to the local about my planned three-kilometre swim up the coast to the next hotel, his eyes went bug-eyed. “Watch out for sharks,” was his advice.

Almost 40 years ago my wife, Dale, and I honeymooned in Antigua at the rustic Blue Waters Beach Hotel. This past winter, as part of a celebratory Caribbean island cruise, our plan was to revisit the place where we had been so ferociously in love.

Unfortunately, when I contacted the now five-star Blue Waters resort and spa to explain that we wanted to stop by and see the place again, go for a dip and buy lunch, we were told we'd have to pay \$65 (U.S.) each just to get through the gate.

Dale and I came up with a better, cheaper idea.

Since all 365 beaches in Antigua are public, we planned an amphibious landing on the shores of the Blue Waters. A three-kilometre, open-water dip would be a snap since I'd been swimming all over the world and writing a new book about swimming with writers.

We left the cruise ship in the



The author, on his honeymoon in 1975, swims stealthily into his honeymoon resort many decades later. DALE TAYLOR

capital of St. John's and hopped on a local bus (\$1) for a wild 20-minute ride to Dickenson Bay, a long stretch of sand and unbearably azure water.

We hiked to the far end of the beach and, for \$20, rented a tandem kayak for Dale to paddle beside me.

On this side of the headland there were no waves, but as I swam the water was cloudy with sand and for a while I couldn't even see my hands. Totally vulnerable, far out in open water wearing only my Speedo and goggles, I kept dwelling on that shark warning. But moving arm

over arm through deep water with Dale leading the way in the kayak, I couldn't have felt luckier.

Pretty soon the water became crystal clear and much deeper. But now I could see an alarming number of fish, marauding barracuda and spooky, swaying seaweed. I wondered again if sharks were attracted to sunscreen, lip balm and skinny-assed Canadians who think they have good karma. The wind picked up and the waves got steeper. I had to dig harder, trying to find a rhythm in the waves.

Finally, the cliffs of Blue Waters came into sight. Dale yelled,

“There's the stone bench where I used to sit in my orange bikini.” Now the once natural cliffs were dotted with villas.

I swam by the resort's secluded third beach where I had once helped the fisher folk haul in their net; now I looked over at a huge catamaran filled with drinking tourists, anchored off the shore of our honeymoon memory.

As Dale kept waving her paddle and pointing out half-forgotten landmarks, I was concerned about being hauled away by binocular-toting hotel staff. But Dale paddled and I swam right up to

the beach directly below our old hotel room where once we had lined the balcony with seashells. We looked up, half expecting to see the 1975 version of ourselves looking down.

With the kayak pulled onto the beach just enough to allow for a quick getaway, I pulled Dale back into the turquoise water for a deep embrace and even deeper kiss.

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