

## A stylish summer by the sea

Text: Anna Blom

*Not sure if your holiday plans will go ahead this year? Luckily the pandemic can't stop us from dreaming. Bring out your inner holiday fashionista and get ready for a summer in style. Anna Blom explores the array of swimwear and accessories that will take you from beach to party.*

ARE YOU YEARNING FOR holidays by the sea? This summer's swimwear delivers a long-awaited energy boost. Like us, fashion designers are fed up with dressed-down styles and baggy sweatpants – so this season's swimwear is all about joy and experimentation, with bright colours, bold patterns and daring details.

The influence of the catwalk is particularly clear this year. This is something that Maria Tollemark, buyer at fashion store Wakakuu, confirms.

“High-waisted jeans and trousers paired with cropped tops are big news and we can see a take on this in bikini bottoms with higher waists. Cut outs and asymmetric shapes, which we see in dresses and tops, are also featured in this year's swimsuits,” she says.

Other trends that are popular in both clothing and beachwear collections include ribbed fabrics, various knot details and animal prints. But alongside the playfulness, the focus is still on timeless style and comfort.

“I always think a classic black swimsuit or bikini is the way to go. If you buy one in a high-quality material and take care of it, it can be a part of your wardrobe for years,” says Maria Tollemark.

LAST YEAR'S craze for sportswear and functional clothing is also apparent in swimwear, with a particular focus on surfing. But another example of how comfort has taken on new forms is the way designers have begun to play with materials like terry towelling, often in matching sets with shorts and a jumper – making towels redundant.

“Sporty fashion has become more popular in general. People want to dress comfortably, but they also want to dress stylishly and fashionably,” says Maria Tollemark. In the hunt for the right beachwear for you, there is a huge range of styles and sizes online, but how do you find the right size and avoid unnecessary returns?

“The key is to read the product description. Check the size recommendations for measurements and fit. Also look at the product images. Even if you and the model are different shapes, you can see how the bikini is cut, how high it is at the waist and so on,” advises Maria Tollemark.

Once you've found your swimwear, it's a good idea to take extra good care of it, as it's constantly exposed to sunlight, chlorine and salt water.

“If you take care of your swimwear, it can last for many seasons,” says Maria Tollemark. “After bathing in chlorine or salt water, shower or rinse yourself in clean water before sunbathing, otherwise the salt or chlorine may bleach your swimwear. When letting your swimwear dry in the sun, turn it inside out to prevent colour fading. Also try not to expose your swimwear to chemicals, such as sunscreen or sun oil, as grease is difficult to remove from textiles.”

BUT BACK TO dreaming about fashion. Maria Tollemark doesn't believe that this summer's swimwear is restricted to cliffs and sheltered courtyards. A swimsuit can also be used as a bodysuit under a jacket. And beach bags are more fashionable than ever. So what should you consider if you want to go from sun lounge to the city or even dinner (or a party!) with ease while still looking stylish?

“I would go for a simple black swimsuit that you can match with a nice skirt or jeans paired with heels or sandals! For cooler summer evenings, I would bring a pretty knitted sweater to wear around my shoulders,” concludes Maria Tollemark.  
Let summer 2021 begin!

## Three trends to watch in 2021

**1) The environment and microplastics:** The way in which we care for our swimwear is not only important on a personal scale. All textiles, whether natural or synthetic, release micrometre-sized fibre fragments when washed. Swimwear in particular is often made of synthetic materials that release microplastics when washed and may contain chemicals that are not water-soluble. The important thing is to choose swimwear that complies with EU legislation and does not contain the most dangerous substances, and not to buy cheap swimwear online. It's also a good idea to use a laundry bag to capture microplastics so they don't get washed down the drain when you wash your clothes.

**2) Too much tan isn't a good look:** Sun-scorched or sun-kissed? Being super tanned in 2021 isn't hot. So says Wenche Bohman Hughes, owner and CEO of Cow Perfumery. "A deep tan, the kind you get from really roasting in the sun, is definitely not trendy. We're so aware of the negative effects of the sun on the health and quality of our skin that a deep tan looks unhealthy," she says. "Instead, well hydrated and lightly bronzed skin are the way to go, regardless of your skin tone," says Wenche Bohman Hughes. She also points out that it was only after Coco Chanel got a little too much sun while cruising the Mediterranean in the late 1920s that the tanning trend took off.

**3) Surfing is hot in Sweden:** Designer Manne Glad has always been a big fan of surfing. He's now opened Stockholm Surfboard Club. "After my years at Acne Studios, I felt that there was more to be done regarding surfboards, the creation of surfboards and surf culture in general. The project is very design-driven, with a special focus on surfboards. It grew organically with wetsuits, surf accessories and then later some clothing," says Manne Glad. The swimsuit above is from Stockholm Surfing Club.

## A crash course in the history of swimwear

18th century: People bathed in long bathing gowns in linen or cotton, sometimes with loops for their feet to stop them from riding up.

19th century: Special bathing suits, slippers and swimming caps became popular. A common swimsuit model was a two-piece garment consisting of drawers, or bloomers and a blouse or tunic of varying lengths, with a marked waist, high neck and sleeves. For the sake of decency, long woollen socks could also be worn. Woollen fabrics were commonly used for sea bathing costumes.

20th century: At the turn of the century, bathing in the sea became popular among the wider population. Cotton flannel was a common material and lots of decorative ribbon was used to adorn the swimsuits in the coveted sailor style. Popular colours were red, white and blue. At the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, women competed in the swimming and diving events in thin jersey swimsuits, and it made more casual swimwear more acceptable.

1920s: Swimming became part of the new type of holiday lifestyle with full days at the beach. In addition to swimsuits, still preferably a two piece and somewhat dressy, playsuits and beachwear was needed that could be worn on top of a jersey swimsuit. Bathing caps and accessories were often made of rubber materials. For more casual summer swimming, there were jersey swimsuits for both men and women. Some had cut outs in the sides to lighten them up.

1930s: At the end of the 1930s in Sweden, lots of people were given statutory annual leave, which was happily spent in the open air and swimming. Woollen knit swimsuits that provided warmth even after cold swims, showing off the shape of the body, became popular. Tanning was the new ideal, and swimsuits shrank too. Shoulder straps became thinner, backs became bare and two-piece swimsuits were an option for the more daring.

1940s: After the Second World War, new man-made materials became popular. This made multiple colours and patterned swimwear possible. In 1946, two fashion designers independently launched their two-piece swimsuit models. Jaques Heim called his model 'Atome'. Later that year, on 30 June 1946, the first peacetime atomic bomb was dropped on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean. A few days later, fashion designer Louis Réard showed a two-piece swimsuit in Paris. Heim's model became the most popular, but it was Réard's name that caught on: bikini.

1950s: The bikini was popularised by American film stars in the 1950s. Not least by Brigitte Bardot in the film *Manina, The Girl in the Bikini* from 1952. Fashion became more and more corseted, and even swimsuits became more figure-hugging. At the same time they were fitted with padding, cups, underwiring and zippers – and sometimes they were strapless with skirts. Speedo launched men's nylon swimming trunks for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. The shorts quickly became a classic.

1960s: Bikinis became more common in the 1960s as new materials and body ideals took hold. Most notably, bikini bottoms shrank and became so low that the navel and lower part

of the stomach became visible. The bikini quickly gained an important position in popular culture and prompted moral controversy. The 1960s also saw the arrival of Lycra/elastane, which, together with polyamide, gave swimsuits a whole new elasticity.

1970s: Since the early 1970s, bathing fashion has been marked by the capabilities of Lycra and we look with wonder at the thick, unwieldy swimsuits of the 1920s and 30s.

1980s –1990s: Colourful swimwear became popular, emphasising a fit body ideal. Swimsuits had high-cut legs and bikini tops were often strapless. TV series like *Baywatch* showed fit but big-breasted women's bodies and made swimsuits popular again.

2000s: Swimwear blends inspiration from previous decades, but in new designs with increasingly sophisticated materials. Swimwear is not just functional but very much part of fashion. Mix and match creates multiple options so you can choose your own combinations. The more elegant swimsuits of the 1950s made a comeback.

Source: Pernilla Rasmussen, Lecturer in Fashion studies at Lund University.

## **Four hot swimwear trends 2021 / Women**

The little black bikini: Looking for something timeless? Just as the little black dress is an enduring wardrobe classic, the little black bikini is a safe bet that will last season after season. This summer, the catwalk's fashion designers suggest an updated look, preferably retro-inspired with a higher waist. Flattering and elegant in every way.

Ruffles: Playful ruffle detailing appears on everything from swimsuits to bikinis this summer. These cute little adornments create an exciting contrast when mixed with bold silhouettes and cut out details.

Cut out details: One of the catwalk trends that this summer's swimwear has embraced is cut out details. Used to emphasise the waist or shoulders or with keyhole openings, they offer sensuality and stylishness at its best.

Animal prints: Animal prints aren't really a trend, they've become something of a classic print that we see season after season. But sometimes there's a little something extra, like this summer where the beautiful animals of the savannah influence swimsuits and bikinis in various wild interpretations.

## **Three hot swimwear trends 2021 / Men**

Snug-fitting swim shorts: Forget voluminous, loose-fitting swim shorts that restrict you in the water. But you don't have to wear super-tight trunks to be fast and agile either. Several brands have redefined swim shorts, such as British brand Orlebar Brown. Their swim shorts often have side ties and waistbands so that the wearer can adjust them for the perfect fit. Plus, they work just as well in the city as in the water and come with a five-year warranty. Ship ahoy!

Surf inspired: Surf culture has long influenced fashion and from being labelled a sport for long-haired stoners (think the character The Dude in the movie *The Big Lebowski*), surfers are now the hottest thing on the beach. The lifestyle signals nature, freedom, joy and a relaxed attitude. Add a touch of colour and pattern, sun-kissed skin and the right cut and you've captured the style.

Classic: A pair of classic swim shorts with a stretchy elasticated waistband and soft lining is as comfortable as it is practical. This summer, try plain shorts, or go for retro-inspired prints for a more daring look.

## **Five questions for...**

**Sofi Fahrman, influencer and co-founder of swimwear brand Seaquelle**

### **How does Seaquelle differ from other swimwear brands?**

The world doesn't need a new swimwear brand, but the fashion world needs more inspirers and brands that choose to find new paths to sustainable fashion. An important part is to look at new materials. We use Econyl, which is 100% recycled material made from plastics found in the oceans.

### **What does it take to design a really good swimwear collection?**

It should be a celebration of the female body, so women feel beautiful and comfortable.

### **What is your design process?**

The vision and dream must be translated to the sketchpad. That's where our designer Moa Orrbacke excels. Sometimes I feel like she reads my mind. Once we've sketched the winner, we decide on the colour and pattern and the idea is turned into reality in the factory. We try to work with short lead times and capture the desires of our followers.

### **What are the inspirations behind this summer's collection?**

Sailing, terry towelling, blue tones, rope details, Scandinavia and vitality.

### **Can swimwear be part of your everyday wardrobe?**

Everything we do is based on 'on and off beach'. For example, we have a bare-shouldered smocked model that works perfectly as a top with a skirt or shorts.