

## BARE-ARSED THROUGH THE AGES

### 150,000BC

The main "lifestyle choices" are hunting and nudity. Anyone caught wearing fur is stoned.

### 700 BC

Greeks like being naked. They compete at Olympics naked. They fight in wars naked. The Greek word for naked is "gymnos". This means they go to the gym naked.

### 16th Century

The rise of the Puritans, a miserable bunch of Christians. They hate pleasure and refuse to bathe as it promotes nudity. They are exiled to America as soon as possible.

### 18th Century

The nude natives of the San Francisco Bay area greet explorers from the West, who bring gifts of religion, disease and clothes.

### 19th Century

The peak of the British Empire: no-one shows any flesh at all; no-one has sex; all conquered natives are wearing clothes. They don't know why.

### 1900

Nudist magazine *Health & Efficiency* launched. It features happy girls on beaches, with beach balls "accidentally" covering their unmentionables.

### Early 20th Century

Modern nudism started by (who else?) the Germans. The new lifestyle unfortunately also means harsh outdoor living and a vegetarian diet. And frisbee. Possibly.

### The 1960s

Flower children throw away their clothes and make love for an entire decade. Their parents "strongly disapprove".

### 1970s/'80s

The sexual revolution cranks up. In 1974, the UK's *Daily Mirror* is the first large-circulation newspaper to show an active stalker on its front page. An attractive blonde called Sally is shown pinned against the wall by a dedicated London policeman.

### 1990s on

Social nudity becomes unofficially accepted in Australia, America and Europe. All but two of Denmark's beaches are clothing optional. Amazing, isn't it? Who knew Denmark had beaches?

time irony and *New Idea* ever appeared in the same thought.

We knock the balls around, so to speak, and exchange small talk with the couple at the next table. I'll call them Dennis and Sandra to protect their children, who can't possibly suspect their folks play pool without their gear on. It could be worse – they could be line-dancing.

It's clear that Sandra is uncomfortable with our shorts and T-shirts. We are clothing fascists. "It's horrible," she eventually mumbles. Padding nude around a chilly barn with a pool cue is only fun if everyone else is doing it too. It may be cold, but that's not the point.

Already, I can see myself getting tired of all this, but in the spirit of it, I suggest strip pool. We glumly climb out of our clothes and my girlfriend's fragile game disintegrates. It's as fun as a damp cheese sanger.

"That's better," says Sandra happily, as Dennis sprawls forward over the table for an unhygienic long-shot.

I ask what they're doing here, but get no clear answer. Sandra says it's fun. Dennis says, "We found it on the Internet and thought we'd give it a go."

He misses another easy one into the middle pocket.

At that moment, a 12-year-old girl wearing pyjamas wanders in and sits down. The possible social and moral implications of this collide in my brain like a train wreck. All I can think is that my clothes are in a pile 3m away. I turn away and pretend to study a poster of a smiling woman wading across a river back in the '70s. Finally the girl gets bored and leaves, thank God.

On the way back to the cabin, my girlfriend tells me that this is a classic insecurity dream – except it's real, and we're paying for it.

Later, the neighbours in our two-cabin block arrive in a Pajero. They're young. More importantly, they aren't fat. They haven't put in the hard years of pies and cigarettes the dinosaurs by the pool have.

I twitch the curtain like a regular Mrs Mangel. It's exciting, for no good reason. She's a scrawny-looking blonde and he's a stocky bloke with a chubby face. We are total strangers, but I know I will soon see them nude. And they will see me.

In the morning, I get up, slip on sandals and a hat, and walk outside. Actually, I sensibly put on sunscreen, too, but you don't want to know about that. Our neighbours also emerge, get in their car and drive off. They are still dressed.

We go for a hike alongside the river, the other main activity here. As we take our first few steps of active nudism, I feel things I've never felt before – daring and liberated, for instance, and finally at one with the plants and animals. I throw up my arms like it's the final whistle of Origin III. "I'm free at last," I shout. "Thank God almighty, I'm free at last."

Only I don't.

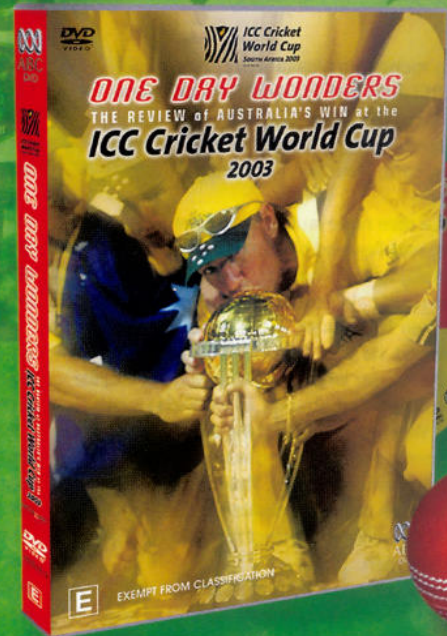
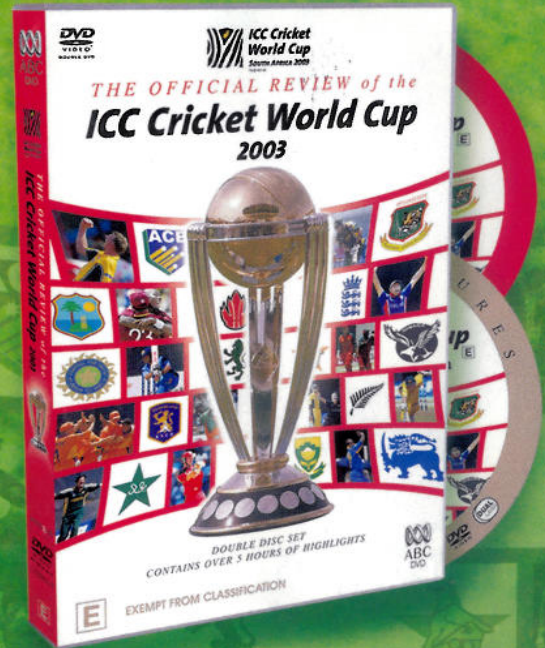
All I feel is a vague sense of something missing, like I've forgotten my car



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