

Rob Fryer's
WILD SWIMMING
Guide

to traditional watering holes in rivers, afonydd, abhainn, becks, burns, gills, nantydd, allt, pools, pwellau, goyles, dubs, pots, lakes, meres, flashes, lynns, llynoedd, quarries and a bourne; many popular, some forgotten, some stolen, some gone, some fairly safe, others rather dangerous, many beautiful.

previously known as *Rob's Directory of Cool Places*.

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Legendinside back cover

DANGERS – COLD WATER

°F	TEMPERATURE GUIDE	°C
115	Hot Springs at Bath.	46
85	Indoor pools are usually this hot.	29
75	Many lakes achieve this, but only a few UK rivers do. the Cam, the Wye & perhaps the Thames. With the sun on your back, this compares very favourably with indoor pools.	24
70	This is the hottest that many rivers get, lovely but not very exhilarating afterwards.	21
65	An excellent temperature. You should be able to swim for long periods without getting cold.	18½
60	A good temperature to open the season with. Cold at first, but you can easily get used to it. Keep moving. Exhilarating when you come out. Start at 60° before trying colder water.	15½
54-59	Cold, but with a strong sun, bearable. Very exhilarating when you come out though. Wet suit? — well why not?	12-15
50-54	Ground water temperature and rivers downstream of some reservoirs	10-12
32-53	Wet suits? Yes, yes, yes, but hardy folk tell me that you can get used to swimming without such aids as long as you start swimming in the summer & keep it up every day. Winter swimmers swear by the benefits of being acclimatised to these temperatures.	0-11½



RISK of COLD SHOCK
especially in layering water
WALK IN FIRST

When does the season start?

When I was taught to swim (in a river by the school) 60°F was the signal for the swimming season to commence. Once the season had started it continued till the end of the summer term regardless of the temperature*. If you have not swum in the wild before, you too could use 60°F (15½°C) as your minimum starting temperature. Alternatively you could wait for 3 hot days in a row and try the water on the third day. When acclimatised to cold water, I find that at 65° & over I can swim for long periods without chilling & the water feels quite pleasant; between 60° &

65° I chill if I stop swimming, while below 60° & certainly below 55° the water feels cold & my time in it is limited. My home river the Frome, along with many English rivers, seldom tops 70°F (21°C), but some rivers frequently achieve this and along with a number of lakes sometimes top 75°. Together with the sun this feels pleasantly warm & compares very favourably with the 85° of heated indoor pools where the sun is not invited. However water needs to be below 70° if you want to achieve that exhilarating feeling when you come out. Above 70° the water begins to



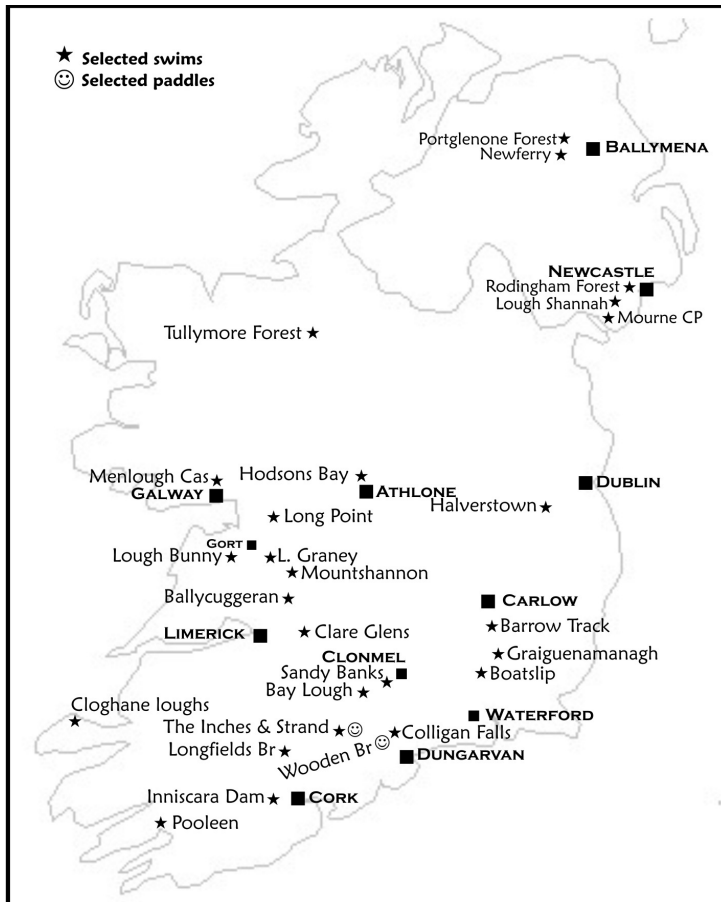
RISK OF STEALTH CHILLING
WEAR WET SUIT

Why are some rivers & lakes warmer than others?

WARM WATER FACTORS	COLD WATER FACTORS
Long hours of sunshine. On long rivers the previous 3 days are relevant.	Water sourced from a reservoir, especially a deep one.
Shallow water	Water sourced from underground, either naturally or pumped.
Slow current & wide river (less tree shade)	Shaded river upstream.
Time of day. Late afternoon is best	Rain (also makes moorland rivers darker peat colour)
Weir controlled river (Thames)	Springs in lake bed
Main current by-passes swimming area (lynn).	

17. IRELAND

The Irish have never been known for officious behaviour, so you can expect some relief from "No swimming" notices, busybodies advising you not to swim and people looking at you funny if you do so. In short Ireland, together with 194 other countries in the world, has a normal attitude to "wild swimming". The IWS website publishes a number of inland (and seaside) beaches where lifeguards patrol.



BLACKWATER RIVER, Waterford Co

Longfields Bridge ☆ west of Mallow which is 20 miles north of Cork. near Newberry. Swimming reported.

Two swims in Lismore, (between Cork & Clonmel)

● **The Strand** ☺☺☺ ☆ Park near the garage shop to the north of Lismore at the junction of the N72 and the R666. Cross the road and 80 yards upstream in the Owennashad River Walk is the pool. This is a tributary of the Blackwater.

Every spring the council bring in a digger to build a shingle weir and thus create a pool. Lifeguards are provided too. Excellent safe paddling and a shallow swim. Picnics? Yes.

● **The Inches** ☆ ☆ ☆ ☺☺ Park on the R666 in the first lay-by on the right, just up from the bridge by the garage (above). This is the turning between the two bridges with the amber and black stripes. This lay-by is very near the Strand, but walk 100 yards up the road, and over the gate into the field to beneath the castle.

A shingle river with a pool beneath the rather oversize castle above. Spectacular. Grand picnics, cows and fishermen permitting.

CLARE RIVER CLARE GLENS

These are not in Co Clare, but on the border between Tipperary & Limerick. Twenty miles E of Limerick and signed on the road between Newport and Murroe. Grid: R730599. Good parking on the far side of the bridge.

● **Clare (road) Bridge** ☆ ☆ ☺☺ Easy access to swimming and playing in the water. Depth variable.

RIVER BANN, Antrim

Newferry ☆ About 10 miles west of Ballymena and immediately north of Loughs Beg and Neagh. A waterski and jetski centre so much care needs to be taken.

Portglenone Forest ☆ About 5 miles north.



The Strand: every year the council fund a digger to make a shingle weir and thus create a pool. I'll eat my hat of this ever happens in England.



The Inches: a spectacular swim in full view of the Duke of Devonshire's pad (Lismore Castle).

THE HEART OF OCCITANIA

walk along the river.

St Etienne d'Issarles☆☆13½Km S of Ganges on the D4, postcode 34190. Atlas p164 C1

This is one of local swimmer Rogier's choices.

Le Pont du Diable★★★★☺☺☺☺ about 30Km NW of Montpellier, very near the Grottes de Clamouse and near St Jean-du-Fos. Atlas p164 B2. On the D27 towards Aniane. Large pay car park: *Mas Du* N43°42.16 E3°6.30



Pont du Diable: the huge shingle beach & pool

The slow running deep river offers two distinct swims: the long gorge swim, and the large pool below. Very popular. Pedaloers for hire. In the gorge there are ledges conveniently set at varying heights for jumping off. Arrive early to bag a site with shade under a tree.

Bélariga☆12Km SE of Clermont l'Hérault on the D32. Postcode 34230. Atlas p164 B3. A favourite of tourist guide Béatrice.

HÉRAULT TRIBUTARY VIS

Cirque de Navacelles☆☆* Between Millau & Clermont l'Hérault and equidistant from Le Caylar and Ganges. And 3Km S of Blandas. Atlas p164 B1
Cold water below a waterfall and in a deep canyon.



La Grenouillet: small, easy and beautiful. Here seen in spate.

Midsummer onwards.

La Grenouillet★★☺☺ Between the C. de Navacelles and Ganges, on the D25 *Route de Lodève*, 34190. N43°51.94 E003°35.26 Atlas p165 B1. Paths lead down from the lay-by by the Com. De Garnies sign. A delightful little swim hidden from the road.

St Laurent le Minier★★★★☺ is about 45Km NW of Montpellier and near Ganges, at the turn off from the D25 for its namesake village. *Route de Ganges* 30440, N43°55.52 E003°39.80, Atlas p164, B1. A very popular and spectacular side with multiple pools.

L'ORB & Tributaries

Gorges d'Heric★★★★☺ about 7Km E of

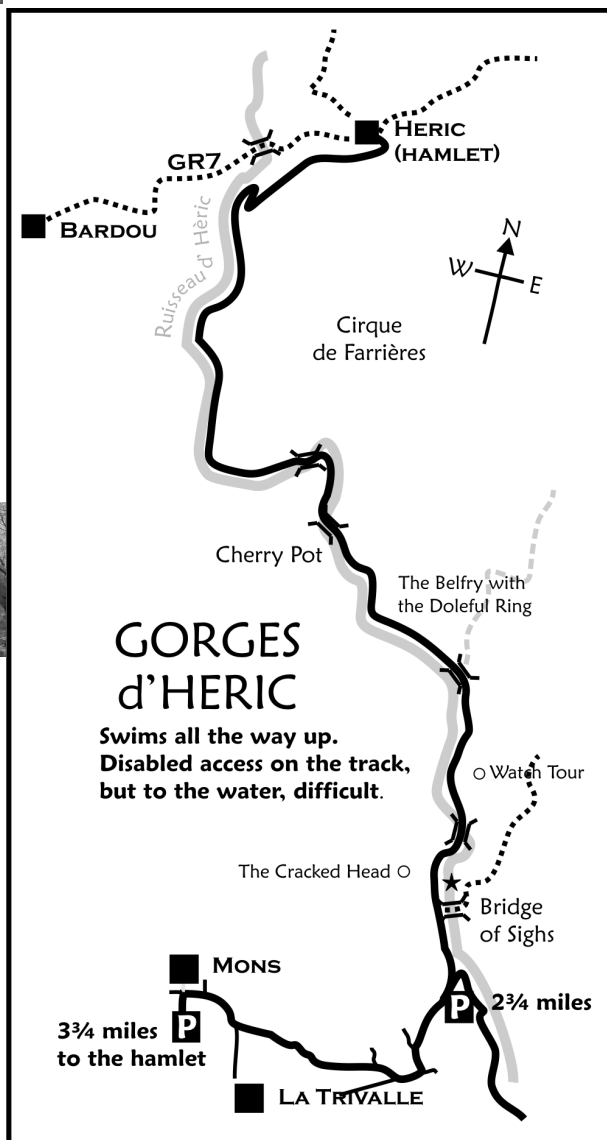


St Laurent: multiple choice swims. Very popular.

Olargues, just E of Mons on the *Route des Gorges*, 34390.

A 2½ mile string of clear pools set in dramatic scenery. Not everybody can reach every pool. Arrive early.

Gorges de Colombières★★★★ About 4Km E of Heric. Follow the *Mairie* sign off the D908 into the *Chemin de Gorges* and the café car park. 34390. Atlas



24 Wild Swimming Database

See page 18 for rating legend. These are divided into 6 areas, each comprising 2 or more chapters. The Post Codes chosen are not always the nearest to the location, but sometimes they indicate the nearest parking. Post Codes in remote areas which are marked ± are some way from the site. Use the National Grid Reference for precise location of the swims. Undesirable swims may not be listed. Grid Refs are used with OS maps or on www.streetmap.co.uk

THE SOUTH WEST: chapters 1- 4

Town	Locality	Name of Swim	Rating	Chap	River	Grid Ref	Post Code
Amesbury	Amesbury	Lord's Walk	★♠	4	(Salisbury) Avon	SU 155419	SP4 7DW
Amesbury	Durrington	Tank Crossing C	☉♠	4	(Salisbury) Avon	SU 158458	SP4 8LB
Amesbury	Fifield	Tank Crossing B	☉☉♠	4	(Salisbury) Avon	SU 147502	SN9 6DQ
Amesbury	Figheledean	Figheledean	★★★★♠☉	4	(Salisbury) Avon	SU 151474	SP4 8 JL
Axminster	Waggs Plot	Axe Bridge	★♠	4	Axe	ST 322016	EX13 7AR
Axminster	Whitford	Whitford Weir	★★♠	4	Axe	SY 263954	EX13 7NW
Barnstaple	Bishop's Tawton	New Bridge	●	3	Taw	SS 568286	EX31 3JH
Bath	Bathampton	Bathampton Weir	★★♠	1	Avon	ST774668	BA2 6TS
Bath	Box	Mill Pool	★★	1	By Brook	ST 826688	SN13 8PJ
Bath	Box	Railway Bridge	★★	1	By Brook	ST 824687	SN13 8NP
Bath	Claverton	Warleigh Weir	★★★★◆	1	(Bristol) Avon	ST 793643	BA2 7BH
Bath	Freshford	Freshford Weir	☉☉◆	1	River Frome	ST 787595	by boat
Blandford	Fiddleford	Fiddleford Mill	★★★★♠	4	(Dorset) Stour	ST 800135	DT10 2BU
Blandford	Sturminster N.	Colber Bridge	★★	4	(Dorset) Stour	ST 783143	DT10 1EG
Bournem'th	Ferndown	Dudsbury Cliff	★★♠	4	(Dorset) Stour	SZ 076977	BH22 8SS
Bournem'th	Longham	The High Bank	★★♠♠	4	(Dorset) Stour	SZ 065973	BH22 9AN
Bournem'th	Northbourne	The Beach	★★★★☉♠♠	4	(Dorset) Stour	SZ089963	BH10 7BL
Bristol	Chew Stoke	The Waterfall	☉	1	Strode	ST 548615	BS40 8TU
Bristol	Henleaze	Henleaze Swimming Club	★★★★♠◆♠	1	Lake	ST 580774	BS10 5HY
Bristol	Pensford	Rising Sun	☉☉◆	1	Chew	ST 617637	BS39 4AG
Bristol	Pensford	Publow	☉☉☉★◆	1	Chew	ST 623641	BS39 4HP
Budleigh S.	Otterton	Otterton Weir Pool	★	2	Otter	SY 080855	EX9 7HQ
Chippenham	Lacock	Bide Brook Weir	★◆	1	(Bristol) Avon	ST 920688	SN15 2PD
Corsham	Slaughterford	The Beach	★☉☉	1	By Brook	ST 838737	SN14 8RG
Dartmoor	Ashburton	Higher Corner Pool	★★★★★♠	3	Dart	SX 715711	TQ13 7NT
Dartmoor	Ashburton	Holne Cliff Pool	★★	3	Dart	SX 709702	TQ13 7NT
Dartmoor	Ashburton	Lower Corner Pool	★★★★♠	3	Dart	SX 715716	TQ13 7NT
Dartmoor	Ashburton	Salters Pool	★★★★♠	3	Dart	SX 711706	TQ13 7NT
Dartmoor	Ashburton	Sherrah Pool	★★★★★	3	Dart	SX697716	TQ13 7NT
Dartmoor	Ashburton	Upper Horseshoe Pool	★★★★★	3	Dart	SX 711705	TQ13 7NT
Dartmoor	Belstone	Cullever Steps	★★♠☉	3	E. Okement	SX 606921.	EX20 1QR
Dartmoor	Belstone	Taw Marsh: lazy pools	★☉☉	3	Taw	SX 618908	EX20 1QZ
Dartmoor	Belstone	Taw Marsh: narrow swim	★★★★☉☉	3	Taw	SX 621919	EX20 1QZ
Dartmoor	Belstone	Vellake Weir	★★♠☉	3	Okement	SX 556904	EX20 4LU
Dartmoor	Burrator Reservoir	Crazy Well Pool	☆	3	Lake	SX 582704	PL20 6PF*
Dartmoor	Cadover Bridge	By the bridge	☉☉☉♠	3	Plym	SX 555647	PL7 5EH
Dartmoor	Cadover Bridge	Upstream & Blacka Br.	☉☉☉☉☉★★♠	3	Plym	SX 560645	PL7 5EH
Dartmoor	Cadover Bridge	Downstream, Nth. Wood	★★★★★☉☉☉	3	Plym	SX 540639	PL7 5EH
Dartmoor	Castle Drogo	Salmon Leaps	☉☉★	3	Teign	SX 722895	TQ13 8JN
Dartmoor	Chagford	Chagford Weir	★★★	3	Teign	SX 699882	TQ13 8HE
Dartmoor	Frenchbeer	Teignturn	★☉☉	3	Teign	SX 643867	TQ13 8EA
Dartmoor	Gidleigh	Highbury Bridge	☉☉☉	3	Blackaton	SX 677884	TQ13 8HW
Dartmoor	Gidleigh	Scorhill Down	☉★	3	Teign	SX 652868	TQ13 8HS
Dartmoor	Horndon	Ger Tor Pool	★★☉	3	Tavy	SX 548828	PL19 9NB
Dartmoor	Horndon	Hill Bridge	★	3	Tavy	SX 532803	PL19 9ND
Dartmoor	Horndon	Holly Tree Pool	★☉	3	Tavy	SX 547825	PL19 9NB
Dartmoor	Horndon	Tavy Cleave Pools	★★★★☉☉	3	Tavy	SX 553831	PL19 9NB
Dartmoor	Horrabridge	Buckator Pools	★★★★☉☉☉♠	3	Walkham	SX 482701	PL19 9EQ
Dartmoor	Horrabridge	Grenofer Bridge	☉☉☉☉☉★☉♠	3	Walkham	SX490709	PL19 9ES

27. WILD SKATING ABROAD

If you get fed up waiting for a frosty spell, why not look abroad?



Where else but Holland? (near Tilburg) © Ian Foreman

HOLLAND

Even here they don't have skating every year. Just as those flowers in the desert bloom so beautifully every 10 years or so when it rains, so Holland blooms when it freezes. A visit to Holland in a skating winter is more like a visit to another world, perhaps Paradise, than a visit to a nearby country. The small number of Dutch who don't skate are completely left out of it, as for the police questioning skaters, they'd almost certainly be disciplined, perhaps confined to an asylum for the rest of their lives. A wonderful sense of enthusiasm and fun grips the whole country.

In January 1997 the canals in **Amsterdam** froze. I went there and skated around the city with my son Mark.



Amsterdam. January 1997
FDSC member Mark joins the throng of Dutch skaters on the Keisersgracht.

There were many other skaters. It looked like a scene from a Christmas card. We even skated under the bridges. You carry your skate guards with you, and put them on when you want to get up onto the pavement and go shopping. Nobody gave us a second glance when we went into shops with our skates on. As for skating on the canals, we certainly weren't questioned by the Dutch police.

Once it freezes you can't buy skates, so you must buy them beforehand, or not at all. If you go to Holland in the winter months you can however skate on one of the huge outdoor rinks. This is the nearest thing to wild skating.

When Jack Frost comes, all the village skating clubs spring to life and they start organising. . .

Skating Tours



As soon as the ice permits, there will be a selection of tours advertised on the Ceefax; mostly in northern and central Holland. Distances vary from 10Km to 150Km. Unlike the Fen Skating Championships or the Elfstedentocht, anyone can enter these tours. No need to be a good skater, just wobble along and complete the distance. Wouter & Tetske took us to the appropriately named village of Waterland, a few miles north of Amsterdam, for the 12½Km "Wijelptoer". I think this translates as White Elk Tour. We entered the tour at a pub by paying a guilder or two and receiving a tour card each. You could start anywhen you liked within two or three hours. The well marked course took us along a network of canals, through the countryside,



Skaters starting and finishing the Wijelptoer, January 1997

under bridges and past windmills. At every turn I half expected to see some Dutch master painting at his easel. Every few miles we got our cards stamped at the same time as enjoying a hot drink and snack. As we had been diligent in getting our cards stamped, and completely regardless of our skating abilities, we



Mark, on the left, enjoys refreshments served on the ice, mid-"toer".



The Wijelptoer