

# VOGUE

## What Is Blue Mind Theory, and Where Can You Experience It?

By Katie Lockhart | October 24, 2024



A Janzu session underway at the Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa beach. Photo: St Barth Pictures

As soon as I hear the sound of waves crashing onto the sand, my shoulders relax. I walk ankle-deep into the water, and my jaw unclenches. My breath naturally slows, and I start to feel lighter, even content. Maybe it's my inner Aquarius, or maybe it's "Blue Mind Theory."

A term coined by biologist Dr. Wallace J. Nichols in his book *Blue Mind*, Blue Mind Theory is the idea that being in or near water puts us into a semi-meditative state, positively affecting our minds and bodies. While the term has been around for a decade, it's starting to take a wider hold thanks to social media. Videos and photos of influencers floating in the ocean, snorkeling with rays, and even getting sea-themed tattoos pepper TikTok and Instagram.

But this isn't just a passing social trend. A 2020 study in the *National Library of Medicine* shows that travelers who participated in water-based activities while abroad saw a "positive impact on the individuals' quality of life, satisfaction. And in a report by the *Travel and Tourism Development Index*, 1.3 billion people have sought nature-based travel experiences, including water.

"Blue Mind and other biophilic practices like forest bathing calm the mind," says Dr. Elizabeth Trattner, Doctor of Chinese and Integrative Medicine and

creator of Helia House, the first biophilic healing center in the US. “All it takes is being near a body of water, which can be as simple as a water fountain to an aquarium or a large, beautiful ocean no matter the season.”

Dr. Trattner was a colleague and friend of the late Dr. Nichols, who passed away earlier this year. “Dr. Nichols describes it as the ‘surprising science’ behind the water’s ability to improve happiness, connection, and creativity,” she says, “Studies have shown that as little as 20 minutes of exposure to water can induce a meditative sense of calm.”

Positive Psychologist and Licensed Educational Board Certified Behavior Analyst Reena B. Patel uses Blue Mind Theory with her patients. “Being near the water can be a mood booster,” she says. “It is believed it can improve mental health by decreasing anxiety and stress levels. It can also increase physical activity levels and desire to be active as well. It not only brings our bodies a sense of calm and peace but can also cause us to feel a spike of energy.”

With stress levels across the globe reaching record highs, it tracks that more and more people are looking for Blue Mind Theory experiences when they

travel. In the Maldives, the country's first wellness-focused resort is quite literally perched above the turquoise water. Joali Being's spa includes a watsu pool where Toru Ogasawara, a master watsu practitioner, leads treatments. Guests float in a warm pool as Ogasawara gently massages, stretches, and moves them along the surface of the water. "Most people experience the deepest relaxation they have never experienced without any sense of time and space," he says. "Some say it was like flying in the sky or in space. Some say it was like floating in a mother's womb. Some people can't help tears, just like I couldn't when I first received a session."

Janzu water therapy is another popular water-based wellness treatment. "Whether on the seashore or in a pool, its series of soft, steady movements helps participants to wash away physical and mental tensions. Sessions stimulate the respiratory, vascular, and immune systems while rebalancing energy centers," says Grégoire Bosc, Janzu specialist at [Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa](#). "The deeper one surrenders to it, the more profound the effects."